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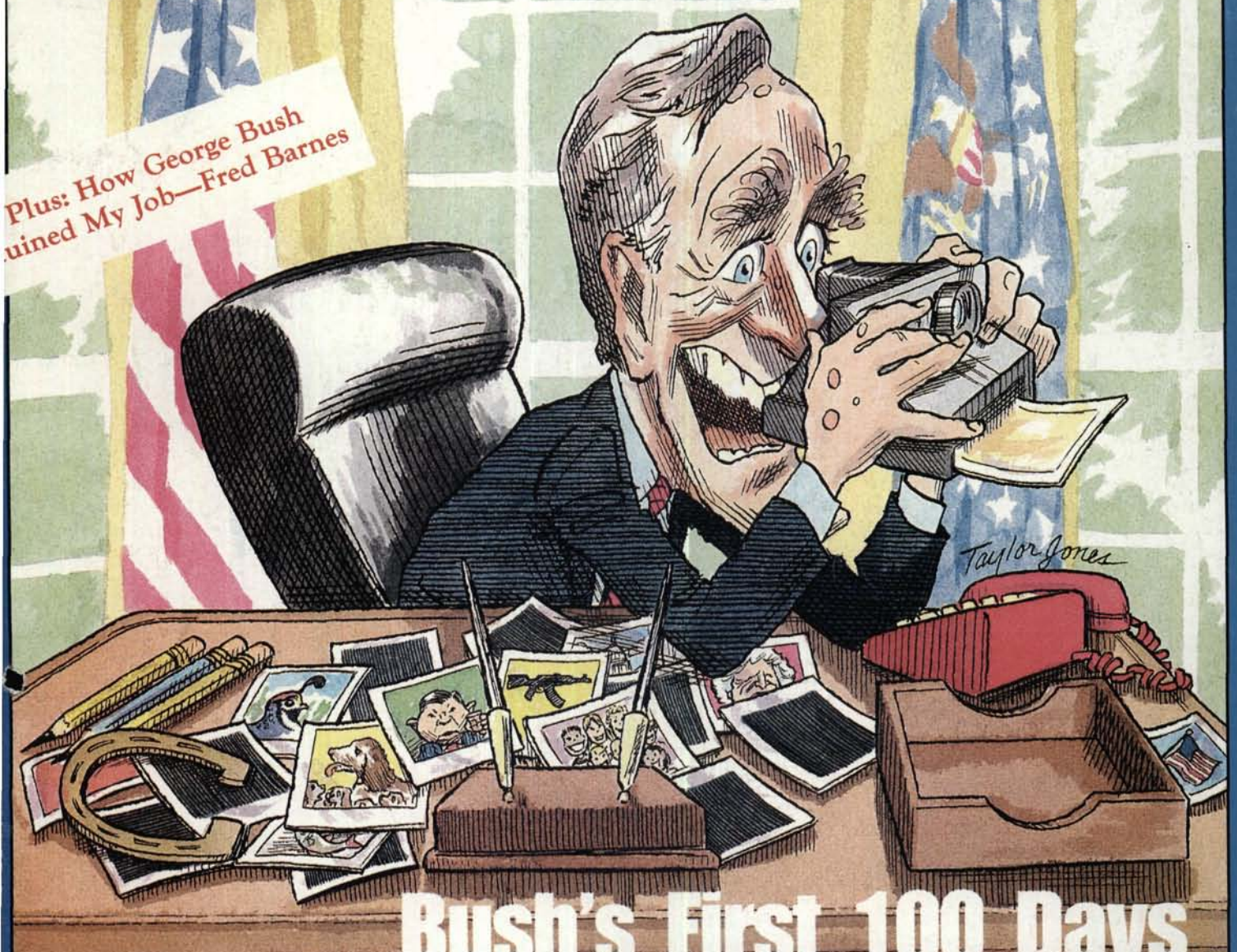

Bush's First 100 Days

Hendrik Hertzberg
Henry Fairlie
Morton Kondracke

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CORRESPONDENCE

Numbers Racket

To the editors:

Ruy A. Teixeira claims that Jesse Jackson's advice for the revival of the Democratic Party does not make sense numerically ("End of the Rainbow," April 3). Teixeira shows that even if blacks, Hispanics, and the poor (those with family income less the $12,500) had voted in the same or even larger percentages than white voters, Dukakis would still have fallen short of the votes he needed to win. But Teixeira wrongly assumes that Jackson's strategy was limited to blacks, Hispanics, and the poor. While these groups are indeed important to a Democratic Party victory, Jackson's populism aimed at the majority of working people, who constitute the majority of Americans who can vote. Dukakis would be president today if those whose family income is under $30,000 (the median U.S. family income) had voted in the same percentages as those with incomes over $30,000, and if the non-voters in the under-$30,000 group had voted like those in the group that did vote.

VICENTE NAVARRO
Baltimore, Maryland

Ruy A. Teixeira replies:

Mr. Navarro's claim is an instructive one since it rests on the assumption that more lower-middle-class voters (e.g., those with a family income between $12,500 and $30,000) would have been a substantial boon to the Democrats. This is precisely part of the Democrats' problem, however—at best, these voters only marginally supported Dukakis, and the closer you get to the $30,000 mark, they tended to support Bush. Thus, when I reproduced Mr. Navarro's scenario using the *New York Times* exit poll data, it turns out that the Democrats, far from gaining the presidency, would have been left further behind Bush (more than five million votes behind) than under the scenarios in my article based on poor people alone.

Disarming Cambodia

To the editors:

In "Stop Pol Pot" (April 3), TNR urges the United States to give arms to Prince Sihanouk as "evidence of true U.S. determination" to achieve democracy in Cambodia. But the editorial fails to warn that Sihanouk is the president of a coalition that is dominated by Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge. Indeed, in Beijing on March 15, the Khmer Rouge's Khieu Samphan and Sihanouk joined together, to represent both factions, to urge the same lethal aid that TNR is seeking. This is why David Hawk, whom the editorial relied upon in urging democracy, did not, in fact, support the notion of lethal aid as the unwary reader might have thought. Instead, he warned the Solarz Committee: "Just last week, Sihanouk was wanting arms to fight Hun Sen."

Cambodia does not need more weapons. And certainly none should be given to Sihanouk until he leaves the Khmer Rouge coalition and assures us against whom the weapons will be used.

JEREMY J. STONE
Federation of American Scientists
Washington, D.C.

Warhol Between The Lines

To the editors:

John Updike simply regurgitates the standard highbrow criticism people have been leveling at Andy Warhol since the '60s—that the artist was a celebrant of nothingness, his work a hollow (if seductive) fusion of commerce and pop aesthetics ("Fast Art," March 27). Yet the revelation of the MOMA retrospective is that Warhol was a far more emotional artist than anyone, including himself, acknowledged. The disaster paintings, in particular, are a clear and unsettling attempt to *reclaim* the horror of a world that regularly reduces tragedy to a mass-media yawn. In professing admiration for Warhol the "philosopher" and then using Warhol's blithe trivialization of his own work as evidence against him, Updike falls into a classic trap: take Andy Warhol at his word, and you haven't heard a thing he said.

OWEN GLEIBERMAN
Boston, Massachusetts

Papa Don't Preach

To the editors:

E. Digby Baltzell ("Blue-blood Blues," April 3), clearly himself a "social trend analyst of some wit," is funniest when he defends the "patriarchal family" that has been "successful through hundreds of generations" without bothering to consider the question, successful for *whom*? The patriarch himself—perhaps the only contender with whom the author identifies?

But even social analysts of some wit should maintain more objectivity than is revealed by Baltzell's suggestion that the problems of poverty, AIDS, and abortion could be "well on [the] way" to remedy if only "all the young girls growing up in America today were to marry the first boy they ever kissed." In placing all the responsibility on the young girl, doesn't a man so clearly proud of his old-fashioned good sense forget that it takes two to tango?

LAURA ROSEN
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Short and Sweet

To the editors:

Teresa Riordan decries the use of scantily clad females in beer advertising, but by applying the word "short" as a pejorative, she undermines her own thesis ("Miller Guy Life," March 27). Presumably, she dislikes the tendency of the frat-boy mentality to be preoccupied with mere physicality, and she clearly resents Miller Brewing Company's blatant pandering to this tendency. But she interprets Miller's advertising strategy as saying that any man who drinks Miller beer will attract women even though he be (her words) "doltish and short." Riordan's word choice reveals her to be, unfortunately, as foolish as those she would have us condemn.

THOMAS EDMISTEN
Hemingford, Nebraska

Beltway Dribble

To the editors:

Leave it to you inside-the-beltway types at TNR to pick an inside-the-beltway team—Georgetown—to win the NCAA Basketball Tournament (Washington Diarist, "Days of Whine and Reruns," April 10). Just as your inside-the-beltway public policy "solutions" are often duds in mainstream America, so too was your pick in the true free market competition of the NCAA tournament. Your team didn't even make it far enough to face certain defeat at the hands of the champions from Middle America. Shame on Jeffrey Dearth and Michael Kinsley, especially, for not betting on their fellow Michiganders. Well, the joke's on TNR. Hail to the Victors!

DEBBIE K. SCHLUSSEL
RUMEAL ROBINSON, *Guard*
MIKE GRIFFIN, *Guard/Forward*
University of Michigan Basketball Team
1989 NCAA Basketball Champions
Ann Arbor, Michigan

The editors welcome correspondence from readers. Letters should include the writer's full name, address, and telephone number; be typed double-spaced; and be held to under 200 words. Letters may be edited for space. Please address letters to: Correspondence, TNR, 1220 19th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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FROM WASHINGTON

The First 100 Zs

Gosh. Has it really been a hundred days already? No, not really. As I sit down to write this, George Bush has in fact been president of the United States for exactly 89 days. But the exigencies of magazine publishing—"lead time," we call it—require the gun to be jumped. Of course, Bush still has 11 days to pull off some dazzling feat that will vault him out of the slough where, to all appearances, he is contentedly wallowing in a mire of puppy-tickling, Bar-baiting, Polaroid-shooting, horseshoe-chucking, nice-little-note-writing, amiable vagueness. Better not count on it, though. When I called the White House press office to find out if anything big was coming up in the next week and a half, I was told that the president will be taking a trip to Chicago and the West Coast, that he might have something to say about vocational education, and that a statement about amendments to the Clean Air Act is a distinct possibility.

Zzzzzz.

I suppose I shouldn't get too far into this without acknowledging the idiocy of judging Bush on the basis of his first hundred days in office. This fundamentally mindless journalistic convention has less to do with anything substantive than with the fact that we have a ten-based number system. (If we had six fingers on each hand instead of five, we'd hold the pontificating till Day 144.) According to William Safire's indispensable *Political Dictionary*, the obsession with counting days in units of 100 can be traced to Napoleon's Elba-to-Waterloo failed comeback in 1815. The device was revived for the special session of Congress in 1933, when, spurred by desperation and Franklin D. Roosevelt's masterful voice on the radio, the House and Senate shouted through the first New Deal. One of FDR's many legacies to his successors is that they must run the hundred-days gauntlet in the press. Normally the comparisons are unfavorable.

It's particularly absurd to compare Bush with FDR, or for that matter with Ronald Reagan, since both Roosevelt and Reagan defeated incumbents of the other party in the midst of hard times. The closest parallel, actually, is to FDR's hapless predecessor. Like Bush, Herbert Hoover was a conservative Republican elected to succeed a much more conservative Republican in whose administration he had served; and, like Bush, Hoover took over at a time of peace abroad and business-oriented prosperity at home. Maybe Bush had this parallel in mind when he asked a gaggle of out-of-town reporters at lunch a couple of weeks ago, "Herbert Hoover looks better today than he did 40 years ago, doesn't he?" ("No, no!" the reporters hooted.)

Still, the hundred-days exercise is obligatory for columnists, like the compulsory figures in Olympic skating competitions. And it isn't as if Bush didn't know this was coming. When *Newsweek* interviewed him just before the inauguration, the opening question was as follows: "One hundred days from Friday, everybody in the press will be writing the story of Bush's first hundred days. What do you want that story to say?"

"I don't know," Bush replied forthrightly. Sensing that this wouldn't do, he added that he'd "like to have it written that we made major strides towards getting a grip with Congress on the budget deficit," that he'd "like to think that you might see by then some new foreign policy initiative—I don't know where or how," and that he'd "like to think that the American people would clearly understand [by] then my commitment to the environment or to education or to . . . other causes, even though the resources that we can bring to bear on them are going to be restrictive."

Judged by this extremely modest agenda, the Bush administration so far has not been a success, but it has not been a total flop either. There has been an agreement of sorts with Congress on the budget, though it is sketchy, wholly lacking in specifics, and based on wildly optimistic economic projections. On the environment, Bush at the beginning did indeed show himself to be markedly more sensitive than Reagan, both in his appointments (William Reilly at EPA) and some of his actions (a proposal to reduce the chlorofluorocarbons that attack the ozone layer)—though all the goodwill thus earned was squandered by his supine passivity in the face of the Alaska oil spill. On education, Bush has been a joke. Believe it or not, his budget calls for a reduction in spending.

Bush is not especially interested in domestic policy, but even if he were he couldn't do a thing about it because, as he notes, his government hasn't got the money. That this should be the case after six years of economic growth and private opulence is grotesque, but he has only himself to blame—himself and Reagan. The two of them have done their best to convince the public that taxation, with or without representation, is tyranny. And on the most important domestic problem—the growth of a virulently pathological underclass that breeds violence and hopelessness—Bush has had absolutely nothing to say. The thousand points of light are winking out like so many fireflies.

The picture is better in foreign policy, mostly because of actions taken by our former enemies. The promised "initiative" hasn't materialized. While the administration dawdles over its "strategic review," Mikhail Gorbachev glances at his watch and drums his fingers on the negotiating table, wondering when Bush will show up. The Russians slash their arms budget, Soviet voters throw the rascals out, the Poles and Hungarians take the first long steps toward parliamentary democracy—and Bush remarks petulantly, "We'll be ready to react when we feel like reacting." So there, you meanies.

Bush does have one accomplishment, albeit a negative one: he has bagged the *contras*. And it is barely possible that this may be part of a conscious and not unintelligent strategy for deideologizing American foreign policy without unduly provoking the far right. Reagan's policy of overthrowing the Nicaraguan government by proxy war was doomed from the start. Its main purpose, I always thought, was to provide psychological gratification to conservatives and neoconservatives by enabling them to blame liberals for thwarting a noble attempt to roll back communism. But when communism took to rolling itself back, the *contra* war became a redundant nuisance. Maybe Bush is just taking things one step at a time. Maybe he figures that liquidating both the *contras* and the cold war would be too much for his right-wing supporters to choke down all at once. Now that he's gotten away with the first, he can turn his attention to the second. At least I hope that's what he figures.

Bush is hard to dislike. In fact he's hard to feel strongly about one way or the other. His openness and his disdain for image-making will probably be dropped before long, but they're nice while they last. He seems to view the presidency as a place for stewardship, not leadership. He's content with coalition government. He's not actively dangerous. He's inarticulate and occasionally silly. His administration is a crashing bore. His hundred days have felt like a thousand. Zzzzz.

HENDRIK HERTZBERG

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
MAY 8, 1989

CLEANING HOUSE

Richard Nixon's "Checkers" speech. Jimmy Swaggart's "I have sinned" sermon. You have to dig deep into the annals of career-salvation oratory to find the equal of Jim Wright's maudlin and unmoving defense of his ethical record. Facing a roomful of reporters, and flanked by prominent Democrats (most of whom wouldn't mourn Wright's passing for longer than a sound bite), the Speaker of the House spoke emotionally about everything from the joys of authorship to his wife's virtue. Referring to allegations that she got an $18,000 salary from a corporation co-owned by Wright and his friend George Mallick in return for roughly zero actual work, Wright shifted his voice into pathetic-quiver gear and said, "My wife is a good, decent, caring, thoroughly honorable person, and I'll damn well fight to protect her honor and her integrity. . ."

It's nice of him to volunteer, but he won't have much of a fight on his hands, because the House Ethics Committee's accusations are against him, not his wife. In the case of the $18,000 salary (and of the Cadillac the company "loaned" her and the Fort Worth apartment Mallick "provided" for her), she's seen as a mere conduit in a scheme for getting money from Mallick's pockets into the Speaker's. (No one is saying Mallick expected *Mrs.* Wright to look favorably on legislation he had a financial interest in.) And she has nothing to do with the other main charge against her husband: the scheme by which mass sales of the Speaker's "book," a bunch of old speeches and anecdotes called *Reflections of a Public Man*, were allegedly used to circumvent honorarium limits and otherwise bring lobbyists' money into his bank account.

Nor does Mrs. Wright figure centrally in the other two shady deals that warranted exploration by the Ethics Committee but weren't unequivocal violations of House rules: Wright's attempt in the late 1970s to get the secretary of state, Anwar Sadat, and various other notables to cut a break for a friend who at about that time gave Wright a sweetheart deal on a lucrative gas well; and Wright's exercise of questionable influence in shielding Texas savings and loans from the kind of government scrutiny they deserved, an effort that entailed stalling one of the first critical legislative efforts to do something about the S&L crisis.

Perusing the Ethics Committee's forceful and thorough report on Wright, and comparing it with the strained 108-page reply Wright has filed, make it clear that the doubts about Wright's ethical character are formidable. They're too big to be concealed by red-herring soliloquies about his wife's honor, and they're too big for him to live down within the next few years. If Jim Wright is truly a public man capable of reflection, he will soon see that the interests of the Democratic Party, as well as the interests of the nation, call for him to resign as Speaker as soon as he gracefully can.

Sympathy for Wright is coming from some strange places—notably, the right. Conservatives who spent the

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Reagan years denouncing zealous ethics police are having trouble breaking the habit. *Wall Street Journal* editorialists have taken the opportunity to warn that ethics hyperconsciousness has reached such levels that "two Justice Department officials recently left a $20 bill on the table to cover an editorial board lunch at this newspaper." What's wrong with that? If everyone in Washington were pedantically scrupulous, then ethical shoddiness wouldn't grow to the large and consequential proportions it's reached in Wright's case.

Washington is a long, long way from that day, as Wright's defenders note; Congress has many members roughly as shady as Wright, and their stories are, often as not, disturbingly parallel to his: the technical violations of House rules are less startling than the unseemly mischief that *doesn't* break the rules. Wright seems to be counting on this abundance of Capitol sleaze in his uphill struggle to win vindication from his peers. In his rambling monologue, many detected a subliminal message to colleagues in the House: few of you have spotless records, so you'd better think twice before doing anything to me that might trigger an inquisition. That strategy may work with Congress, but it certainly doesn't work with the rest of us. On the contrary, our eagerness for the end of Wright's days as Speaker is only heightened by the threat. If many in Congress need to do some soul-searching (and they do), then let the inquisition begin.

Speaking of which: What's Newt Gingrich, Wright's gleeful tormentor, smiling about? The Republican House whip has a shady book deal of his own to explain. When he and his wife wrote something called *Window of Opportunity*, they raised more than $100,000 for promotion from "Republican political activists and business people," according to the *Washington Post*. These contributors formed a limited partnership, and, granted, could have actually made some money had the book sold more than 50,000 copies. But anyone in the publishing business could have guaranteed you it wouldn't. Instead, the deal amounted to giving cash to the Gingriches. The money went toward (*a*) advertisements for the book, which boosted sales and thereby inflated the royalties received by the Gingriches and (*b*) a remuneration of around $10,000 for Gingrich's wife (sound familiar?) for her work as "general partner." Maybe none of Gingrich's benefactors have the sort of direct interest in legislation that George Mallick had, but there aren't many "business people" who have *no* stake in congressional doings. Such subtleties shouldn't escape a man who devotes so much energy to self-righteousness.

Some worry about the distracting effect of all this. George Will complains that we spend too much time worrying about trivial ethical questions and not enough worrying about the bigger ethical problems, such as the budget deficit with which we'll unfairly burden the next generation. But the fact is that little ethical problems *add up* to big ethical problems. The deficit's pernicious effects, notably on our national rate of savings and investment, and therefore on the next generation's productivity, are about to be hugely magnified by the necessity of paying for the S&L mess. And it is Jim Wright's slavish and arguably unethical devotion to the interests of friends and Democratic Party contributors in the Texas S&L business that led him to intervene crudely and forcefully in the regulatory process, complicating attempts to stem the S&L hemorrhage years ago, before it got out of control.

And so it is generally: the more single-mindedly politicians pursue personal gain, the less focused will be their perception of the public interest. For that reason, we are unbothered by the prospect of a day when Washington is pervasively and acutely sensitive to ethical matters. Would it be so bad if members of the House eschewed all subsidy rather than split hairs over whether each benefactor has an interest in legislation? If the spouses of senators avoided, just for good measure, working for lobbyists? If government officials recoiled at the idea of someone treating them to lunch? There's nothing wrong with filling the lives of public servants with reminders that their responsibilities are extraordinary, and that if they can't put up with various kinds of sacrifice, they should find another line of work. If Jim Wright's public execution serves to remind everyone in Congress that they're in Washington on behalf of people other than themselves, then watching his last few pathetic convulsions will have been a reasonable price to pay.

NOTEBOOK

LIES, DAMN LIES, AND NRA ADS: The National Rifle Association continues to assert its pre-eminence (as if anyone ever doubted it) in the related fields of lying and fear-mongering. Take, for example, the recent NRA ad (which ran in, uh, this magazine) that blared "STOP THE SEMI-AUTO GUN BAN" in block letters. The ad attacked gun-control legislation sponsored by Senator Howard Metzenbaum and Representative Pete Stark with such claims as: "If you're one of the 30 million law-abiding Americans who owns a semiautomatic firearm, *you must act now—before you become a criminal.*" Actually, by the NRA's own reckoning, fewer than four million people own the 11 selected assault rifles that specifically come under the proposed Assault Weapons Control Act of 1989. And ownership of these guns, which include the AK-47, the Uzi, and the Ingram MAC-10, would still be perfectly legal under the bill. The difference is that the government would start treating them in the same way it treats automatic machine guns—to which they can be easily converted. This means registering existing guns and banning the transfer, importation, shipping, receiving, and possession of new ones. What the NRA is doing is exploiting confusion over what an assault rifle is. True, all assault rifles are semiautomatic weapons (that is, a series of trigger squeezes fires a series of shots, without any intervening bolt action or other manipulations). But not all semiautomatic weapons are assault rifles. Only those semiautos that can shoot large numbers of bullets without reloading—and are therefore ideal for playground massacres—are the objects of Metzenbaum's and Stark's concern. The NRA doesn't stop with blurring this crucial distinction; its ad is misleading even for those few semiautomatic gun owners whose weapons *are* assault rifles. It warns

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readers that "if you're not approved" for registration, "your gun becomes contraband and you become subject to federal felony prosecution." Yes, if you've ever been convicted of a felony or treated for drug addiction or mental illness, you probably should take the NRA's advice and "*act before you become a criminal*" (or at least even more of one). Never mind the facts, though. As of this writing, the NRA's ad campaign has succeeded in whipping up enough hysteria to pressure Metzenbaum to weaken his bill significantly. It now exempts current owners of AK-47s and other assault rifles from the registration procedures, and settles for merely stopping their proliferation. That's a small step, but a worthwhile one.

STAR WARS:

Gorbachev upstaged and outshouted by Castro during Cuban visit

—*The* (Raleigh) *News and Observer*, April 7

New star Gorbachev steals Castro's show

—same paper, same day
(thanks to David S. Fischler, Faison, North Carolina)

SPLIT DECISION:

Bush and Mubarak agree on need for wide approach

—*London Independent*, April 4

Bush and Mubarak Split on Peace Talks

—*International Herald Tribune*, same day

THOUGHTS OF CHAIRMAN MAL:

ENOUGH ALREADY

"Kinder and gentler"-ing of anything and everything by everyone these days. We know what the President meant. And he means it.

—*Forbes*, April 17, page 21

Has a kinder, gentler spirit suddenly possessed the folks at 11th and Constitution Avenue?

—same issue, page 104
(thanks to Marc Glenetto, Sea Cliff, New York)

MY BROTHER, MY KEEPER: The Israeli security zone in southern Lebanon, a swath of territory roughly five miles in depth, was intended by the Jerusalem government to provide a margin of safety against bombardment and random terror for the population of northern Israel. Right now it is also providing safety for more than 20,000 Lebanese refugees from the fratricidal Arab wars in and around Beirut. Most American media have seen fit to ignore this phenomenon, as well as the irony that the uprooted and besieged people seeking refuge under Israel's protection are Muslims. The Christian population of East Beirut is ringed by Muslim militias and the Syrian army, and is locked into a cordon of death and destruction. But the Christian forces are also raining indiscriminate devastation on their Muslim neighbors. A "CBS Evening News" telecast of April 18 focused on the helpless rage of one innocent victim, a Muslim woman in West Beirut. She was screaming her cry of the heart in Arabic, of course, and the network's correspondent did not (and perhaps could not) translate her message: "*Hatta al'israeliyya ma amlo fina hik.*" Here's the translation CBS didn't provide: "Even the Israelis have never done this to us."

WHY DO THE HEATHEN RAGE: When Father Timothy Healy of Georgetown University was appointed president of the New York Public Library, he was quickly attacked by such luminaries of the high culture as Gay Talese for having insufficient credentials as an intellectual and civil libertarian. In fact, these attacks have little to do with Healy's own record, with the position of the Jesuit order, or with the present-day historic transformation of the Catholic Church itself. Rather, they seem to be one of those recurrent instances of know-nothing anti-Catholicism, once known, and justifiably so, as the anti-Semitism of the liberals.

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

HARDSHIP POST

By Fred Barnes

Roger Ailes, President Bush's media consultant, has an "orchestra pit theory" of what gets covered by the press. "If you have two guys and one's got a solution to the Middle East and the other guy falls in the orchestra pit, who do you think's going to make the evening news and the front page of newspapers all over the country?" The klutz who hurtles into the orchestra pit, that's who. On the basis of his first 100 days as president, that guy isn't Bush.

This is deeply disappointing to reporters. Sure, Bush has made a mistake or two. He let a nutty idea about charging a fee on bank deposits leak, and he invited a Chinese dissident to a barbecue at the American Embassy in Peking, only to have Chinese officials seize the fellow before he got there. But the blunders weren't world-class. They didn't linger as stories day after day. What's worse for reporters, Bush has a dirty little secret. He doesn't have terribly newsworthy ideas about the Middle East, or anything else, either. Au contraire. The

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Bush White House is becoming the dry hole of Washington journalism.

This hasn't made my life any easier. Most weeks I write under the banner "White House Watch," and these days there's not as much worth watching as I'd come to expect after LBJ, Nixon, Ford, Carter, and Reagan. There's no drama or tension; there are puppies. At first I managed well enough. In February I wrote a story saying that Bush lacked an agenda. He'd settled on "themes" for each week—education week, invest in our children week, drug-free America week. Fine. Then the ugly truth dawned on me: once you've written the "no agenda" story, you have to spend the next four years (maybe eight) living it.

A few weeks later I embroidered on the "no agenda" idea by labeling Bush a "caretaker president"—not a bad thing for the nation, necessarily, but death for the press corps. That amounted to coping with the absence of a gripping story line in the Bush presidency by writing about the absence of a gripping story line. For that matter, that's what this story amounts to. I'm not sure how much longer I can keep this up. And if it's bad for me, think of the poor TV reporters who struggle vainly to get on the half-hour network news shows.

Bush couldn't be happier with the White House as a hardship post for journalists. He's the least interesting person to be president since Calvin Coolidge, and he's adjusted his media style accordingly. He's not magnetic, eloquent, driven, ideological, zany, vindictive, unprepared, neurotic, quarrelsome, testy, cracked, or funny. So why flaunt what you haven't got? Bush doesn't. Ailes, refining his theory, says the press is interested in three things: mistakes, attacks, and pictures. Mistakes are what Bush strives to avoid. Attacks are banned because there's only one real target for them, Congress, and Bush's tack is to lovebomb Capitol Hill and make accommodations. Reporters hate this. "Accommodations are boring," says Brit Hume, the White House correspondent for ABC News. That leaves pictures—television. Bush has decided to stay off the tube as much as possible because he just doesn't come off well. He lacks what a White House official calls "visual impact," which was Ronald Reagan's strength. Bush figures he comes across better in print.

Television has gotten the message. In the post-inaugural days of January, Bush-related stories averaged eight minutes, 45 seconds on the three network evening news shows. In February it dipped to six minutes, six seconds. In March to five minutes, 25 seconds. "He's down to just over one story a night," says Robert Lichter, whose Center for Media and Public Affairs tracks the TV shows. "And a lot of those are ones in which he's responding—to the oil spill, automatic rifles." Both Carter and Reagan got more airtime. In the first 60 days of Carter's presidency, the network news shows spent 520 minutes on him, 832 minutes on his administration. For Reagan in the comparable period, it was 399 minutes for himself, 1,030 for his administration. For Bush, it's a measly 265 and 505.

A pleasant consequence of media inattention for Bush is that jokes about him, once a staple for Johnny Carson and Jay Leno, are disappearing. Carson's last good shot was on March 17. "You don't see [Bush] much on television," Carson deadpanned. "I think he's getting desperate. I was watching 'Hollywood Squares' earlier today, and . . ." Leno took note on March 30 that Bush had visited Madison High School in Vienna, Virginia. "He spoke to the students about the importance of education, and he gave them a dramatic demonstration," Leno said. "He said if you studied hard and got good grades, you could grow up to be president of the United States. But if you didn't study and you goofed off—well, Dan, you wanna come in here, please."

Bush is a dazzling performer with small, private groups. But that doesn't do reporters any good because they aren't around. He invited Representatives Newt Gingrich, the new House Republican whip, and Vin Weber for a chat in his private office in the White House living quarters on April 11. They drank beer. Afterward, he gave them a tour of the bedrooms, a viewing of his dogs, a chance to greet Barbara Bush, and a few moments on the Truman Balcony overlooking the South Lawn. They were mesmerized, but reporters didn't even know the president had invited them. Bush did well a week later in wooing AFL-CIO building and construction trades officials with a speech in Washington. He spoke chiefly to the labor leaders on the dais ("dias" he called it). Reporters covered the speech, but there was nothing fresh or of interest to the general public in his remarks—no news. That didn't matter to Bush. The ostensible reason for the speech, ingratiating himself with AFL-CIO honchos, was the real reason.

For Reagan, speeches were a chance to reach the American people and make news. So were responses to questions at photo opportunities and press conferences. Bush practically never addresses the American people. He won't answer questions at photo ops, and he's yet to conduct a prime-time session with the press. Press Secretary Marlin Fitzwater insists Bush will soon give a TV speech to the nation and also have a nighttime press conference, but don't hold your breath. Summoning the American people to action is not Bush's forte. "I'm not Ronald Reagan," he declared at a staff meeting. "I couldn't be if I wanted to. There's only one Ronald Reagan." Nobody argued the point with Bush. In his speeches, Reagan stressed soaring rhetoric. "Bush isn't comfortable with that," says a speechwriter. He likes speeches that are "unadorned, plain, unembellished." And that's what he gets from his speechwriters, flat speeches.

When a speech text is distributed at the White House, panic erupts. Reporters madly hunt for a lead, a new twist on a running story, a zippy quote. More often than not, they come up empty-handed. That means no story, the journalistic equivalent of capital punishment. Richard Nixon never did this to reporters. He required speechwriters to attach a cover letter to a speech they'd drafted. In the letter, they listed three potential leads and the three most quotable quotes from the text. The high school speech Bush gave on April 13 in Union,

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New Jersey, wouldn't have passed the one lead, one quote test. The *New York Times* story began by quoting a placard in the crowd ("President Bush. Read my lips. Don't nickel-and-dime education"), not Bush. According to the White House news summary, the *Washington Post* ignored the story, as did two TV networks. Peter Jennings on ABC-TV kissed off the speech in a single sentence.

Bush's public appearances are frequently unconnected to anything that's happening in the world, which diminishes their news value. In late March the White House was looking for ways to play up the president's education proposals. That's when Bush was booked at Madison High, which isn't a merit school or a magnet school or anything else the president is promoting. So why'd he go there? The son of Stephen Studdert, Bush's assistant for "special activities and initiatives," is a Madison student. Even Bush expressed doubt about the visit. But he went anyway and ate a lunch of pizza, french fries, and milk at the school and talked to students in the library. Again, TV coverage was skimpy, which was good for Bush. He was goofy. He talked about his travels, and said, "Who knows where we'll be next week?" He asked how many students "do the computer stuff?" He mentioned "automated" weapons when he meant "automatic."

No coverage, or limited coverage, is good coverage at the Bush White House. Bush and his aides would rather have the American people see Bush in 30-second sound bites. He's better in small doses. He's good at small press conferences, especially when there are few TV cameras in the room. Fitzwater plans to schedule more Q-and-A sessions with two or three reporters. With no cameras around, Bush got off several snappy jokes at the Gridiron Club dinner on April 1. "People say I'm indecisive, but I don't know about that," he said. "Let's face it," he confessed, "if I was funnier than Ronald Reagan, I would have won in 1980. And he'd be up here tonight trying to laugh away the Bush deficit."

Fitzwater, for one, takes Bush's extraordinary showing in polls as proof the president is getting all the press attention he needs. In April, the *Washington Post* put Bush's favorable rating at 71 percent, against Reagan's 62 percent at a comparable period in 1981. Gallup in late February had Bush at 63 percent, eight points higher than Reagan. Other Bush advisers fear it's risky to anger the TV networks by giving them so little to cover. "Bush places theatricality at a minimum," says a Bush speechwriter admiringly. But Ailes, who talks to Bush twice a week and sat at his table at the state dinner for Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak, thinks the president could use a bit more of stagecraft.

On March 22 Bush went to Lancaster, Pennsylvania, for a meeting in an old schoolroom with Amish and Mennonite community leaders. They were dressed in their quaint clothes. It was a well-planned ceremonial event, the best visual of Bush's presidency aside from his throwing out the first ball on Opening Day in Baltimore ten days later. Trouble was, TV cameras weren't allowed. The Amish and Mennonites didn't want them, and Bush went along willingly. If Ailes had been there, he'd have cried.

The Bush approach to foreign policy.

ONE DAY AT A TIME

By Morton M. Kondracke

In spite of criticism from Congress, allies, Soviets, and the press that the Bush administration is visionless and overly cautious in foreign policy, creative action has taken place on a number of fronts during Bush's first 90-odd days in office. More is promised when Secretary of State James Baker goes to Moscow in early May, possibly including the scheduling of a Bush-Gorbachev summit this fall and the resumption of strategic arms talks. And in late May, probably in Germany, Bush is expected to deliver a major speech setting forth an American vision of Europe's future to compete with Gorbachev's concept of a "common European home" that extends from the Urals to the Atlantic and leaves the United States (not accidentally) out.

One idea being worked on by Bush aides has real promise. It is to declare that Gorbachev's "house of Europe" vision is too narrowly geographic, to hold up instead the "community of values" or "House of Freedom" already inhabited by Western Europe and the United States—in fact, by free nations everywhere—and to invite Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union to join. The price of admission for them would be to establish (on a permanent, legally codified basis) the kind of free institutions that now exist in the West and are responsible for its prosperity and relative tranquillity: contested elections, an uncensored press, market economics, independent trade unions, unhindered travel and immigration, an independent judiciary, and free-flowing information.

Whether or not he puts it this way (and, probably, he won't), Bush would be calling for a community of freedom that extends not just from the Atlantic to the Urals, but from the Pacific to the Pacific—from Kamchatka in the Soviet Far East to Leningrad, across Eastern Europe to Berlin, across Western Europe to Dublin, across the Atlantic and across the American continent to San Francisco. For that matter, it would include Japan, much of Latin America—and any other country that wanted to join.

In this or another speech to be delivered on his trip to celebrate the 40th anniversary of NATO, aides say, Bush will probably also call for an end to the Soviet-imposed division of Europe that made NATO's formation necessary in the first place. That is, he'd repeat earlier calls for tearing down the Berlin Wall, permitting self-determination for Eastern Europe, and renouncing the Brezhnev Doctrine—but put them in a larger context. "The cold war started with the division of Europe," one administration official said. "The way to really end it is to eliminate the cause."

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Some of these themes were set forth in underreported portions of a "new Europe" speech that Baker gave in Vienna on March 6—press attention focused on his proposal that the United States and U.S.S.R. accelerate destruction of chemical weapons stocks—and it's likely that over the next month Baker and others will lay more groundwork for Bush's big speeches by stipulating benchmarks for the world to use in judging Soviet conduct. When he visits Moscow in May, for example, Baker is expected to call on the Soviets to legalize permanently current human rights improvements, including the rules that now allow much-expanded emigration by Jews, Armenians, and others. Baker's lever for making such demands is U.S. agreement to attend a world human rights conference in Moscow in 1991.

According to administration officials, Baker also plans to depart from the narrow, arms-control-minded pattern set by his predecessor, George Shultz, and push hard for relaxation of regional conflicts as a way for Gorbachev to prove that he really believes in "new political thinking"—that is, conducting a foreign policy not based on force. Officials say that Gorbachev has proved willing to withdraw, or to get clients to withdraw, from areas where costs are high, such as Afghanistan, Cambodia, and Angola, but hasn't demonstrated the same tendency in the Middle East or Central America. Baker will also ask for stepped-up Soviet peacemaking efforts in Ethiopia and in South Africa, where Moscow is already working to temper the positions of the African National Congress.

On arms control, Baker reportedly hopes that the administration will have concluded its strategic-weapons review by the time he heads for Moscow on May 8, so that he can get START talks resumed. Administration sources say they do not expect Bush to alter significantly the basic START framework established by the Reagan administration—calling for 50 percent reductions in ICBM warheads—but some of them think he probably will drop Reagan's proposed ban on mobile missiles in order to permit U.S. deployment of a mix of single-warhead Midgetman missiles and rail-mobile MXs.

All this constitutes basically sound policy for the future, but what about the first 100 days? The administration let itself in for criticism by scheduling a dozen comprehensive interagency reviews of major policy that reportedly ended up merely ratifying the status quo. Democratic Representative Les Aspin and others in Congress think the administration and the allies haven't been bold enough in countering Gorbachev's conventional weapons reduction proposals in Europe. Gorbachev, in London, indicated he wanted an end to the American "hesitation" in arms control talks. The press has been demanding drama: a Bush attempt to match Gorbachev as a diplomatic superstar.

The administration has probably made matters worse by seeming testy. Bush snapped to reporters that the United States will respond to Gorbachev "when we are ready." One normally soft-spoken Bush aide said, "We're not going to compete with [Gorbachev] in bullshit," referring specifically to Gorbachev's announcement in London that he plans to forgo production of weapons-grade uranium and to close down two plutonium plants. The United States quit using enriched uranium as a bomb component years ago, officials note. And besides, the Soviets will retain more than a dozen military plutonium plants and have plenty of uranium stockpiles on hand.

It's perfectly legitimate for the United States to deglamorize Gorbachev. While there have been human rights improvements in his country, his government has cracked down hard on nationalist dissidents in Armenia and Georgia. Though the Nicaraguan *contras* have been out of combat for 18 months, the Soviets continue to furnish $500 million a year in military aid to the Sandinistas—five times U.S. aid to El Salvador. The Soviets just sold bombers to Libya. They are rearming Syria, and even though they have influenced the Palestine Liberation Organization to declare a willingness to live in peace with Israel, they haven't stopped Syria and its client Palestinian groups from trying to torpedo the Mideast peace process using terrorism.

Furthermore, even though Gorbachev has been demanding that NATO forgo modernization of short-range nuclear missiles, the Bush administration points out that on sites built for SS-20 and SS-23 medium-range missiles banned under the INF treaty, the Soviets are deploying short-range SCUD missiles and intercontinental SS-25s. "It's all legal," a Pentagon aide said, "but if we do anything far short of that, we get hit for it." Gorbachev has become the toast of Europe by proposing dramatic military cuts, but so far he has neither reduced tank production nor actually withdrawn a single soldier.

The administration also has every right to be cautious in planning policy and to resist demands for grand gestures. As one official observed, "The very people who often demand dramatic moves—I mean, the Europeans, Congress, and the press—are the first ones to complain that you were irresponsible if you move too abruptly. And they are right. The best example is Reykjavik," where Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev nearly agreed to eliminate all nuclear missiles without Reagan first checking with the allies. Administration officials say, further, that an overeager administration will be less likely to win Senate ratification of a START treaty than a cautious one.

"Our goal," said one planner, "is not to turn the whole world upside down in one fell swoop, but to move step by step to get changes that are solid." If the Soviets and the United States can come to agreement on significant troop withdrawals in Europe, for example, maybe the United States could contemplate removing 50 percent of its forces from Europe someday, as recommended by former NATO commander Andrew Goodpaster in a much-cited policy paper. But for now, "we've just tabled a perfectly good negotiating position after intensive consultations among 16 nations," one official said. "We're not going to dump it for something grander."

The caution and prudence are credible as long as there is evidence of movement. And there is. The administration is pushing Israel and the PLO toward indirect talks. It has reached an agreement with Congress to keep the *contras* alive at least through Nicaragua's scheduled elections next February. It's changed U.S. policy on Third World debt and has mounted an aid package to encourage structural change in the economics and politics of Poland. It's decided to look for ways to coop-

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erate with the Soviet Union on "global issues" such as the environment and terrorism. Big moves—including a statement of vision, delineation of a clear global strategy, and the execution of policy—are yet to come. Bush still has three and three-quarters years in which to act, after all.

No one wins if *Roe* is restricted.

DAY IN COURT

By Walter Dellinger

Few observers seem to think that the Supreme Court will actually overturn *Roe* v. *Wade* when it rules in *Webster* v. *Reproductive Health Services*, the occasion for its review of *Roe*. Rather, the conventional speculation is that a majority consisting of recent Court appointees O'Connor, Scalia, and Kennedy and *Roe* dissenters White and Rehnquist will merely narrow *Roe*; they will sustain the state restrictions on abortion that are at issue in *Webster*, thus paving the way for other such restrictions—without leaving states the option of banning abortion outright. In the *Webster* case, these restrictions take the form of a Missouri law prohibiting abortions in public facilities, requiring certain fetal development tests, and preventing public employees from assisting in abortions not necessary to save the mother's life. Among the other restrictions Justice Sandra Day O'Connor has previously indicated she would sustain are a mandatory 24-hour waiting period, a requirement that abortions be performed in fully accredited hospitals, a hospital-committee approval requirement, and a requirement that two doctors concur in each abortion decision.

The anticipated outcome of *Webster* is being billed by some as a reasonable compromise. It is said to be a "moderate" ruling that would preserve access to abortion, thus appeasing pro-choice advocates, while subjecting each proposed abortion to heightened scrutiny, thereby easing the moral concerns of the pro-life movement. This claim is misleading on both counts.

First, under this "moderate" ruling, access to abortion would be ensured mainly for upper-income women; the consequences could be devastating for some young, poor, and less well-educated women. Virtually all of the state restrictions on abortion that O'Connor has written of approvingly would have the effect of making abortions more expensive and difficult to obtain. Permitting state laws that would make safe and legal abortion difficult for working-class and poor women would effectively gut *Roe*, a decision whose signal impact was to advance not just gender equality but economic equality, by extending the option of abortion to lower-income women (who couldn't afford to fly to places where abortion was legal, and didn't have psychiatrists to deem otherwise illegal abortions medically necessary).

Second, and more surprisingly, a curtailment of *Roe* wouldn't be faithful to the sentiments of pro-lifers, either. In fact, the consequences of such a ruling would turn upside down some of the major moral and political arguments that have been made in behalf of restricting abortion.

To begin with, the state regulations likely to be enacted if *Roe* is cut back would tend to delay abortions until a time when they become more morally troublesome. These delays may be substantial: a young woman's fear about securing mandatory permissions, or confusion about complying with a complex set of regulations, or difficulty obtaining money for expensive procedures may postpone her abortion by weeks or months. If there is anything approaching a settled consensus on abortion in this country, it is that abortion becomes more morally problematic as the microscopic fertilized ovum of early pregnancy grows larger and more fully developed. The pro-life movement has gained great rhetorical force from its graphic descriptions of those relatively few surgical abortions performed late in pregnancy. But largely as a result of *Roe* v. *Wade*, this specter has been greatly diminished: nine out of ten abortions are now performed in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy and thus do not involve anything like the procedures described in the pro-life film *Silent Scream*. (Early abortion is arguably a very natural phenomenon: about 60 percent of all fertilized ova spontaneously abort, a figure that dwarfs the number of induced abortions.) Those who are concerned about the morality of abortions late in pregnancy ought to support policies that facilitate abortion at the earliest possible stage. Medically unnecessary state restrictions on abortion lead to precisely the opposite result.

The second irony that the anti-abortion movement will face if *Roe* is curtailed is that early anti-abortion laws were designed to protect women's health; the restrictive abortion laws now being proposed would put women's health at greater risk. A brief filed in *Webster* by Sylvia Law on behalf of a distinguished group of American historians shows that "for a large part of American history, the freedom of women to obtain an abortion was unconstrained by statutory law." The anti-abortion laws passed in the 1860s were essentially "anti-poisoning laws" directed at practices undoubtedly dangerous to women. The situation is now reversed. The American Public Health Association notes in its brief that "today, at *no* point in pregnancy is the risk of death from legal abortion higher than the risk of death from childbirth." The great health risk to women that was ended by *Roe* was the illegal back-alley abortion. (One researcher suggests that as many as 1,500 deaths and tens of thousands of life-threatening complications were avoided in the 1970s by the legalization of abortion.) Restrictions that delay (and therefore complicate) abortion, and drive some women to illegal alternatives, will bring back the health risks that the earliest anti-abortion laws were designed to prevent.

The final irony facing the pro-life movement is that restrictive abortion laws wouldn't have the effect on demographics that earlier proponents of anti-abortion laws sought. According to the historians' pro-choice

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brief, the late-19th- and early-20th-century American laws restricting access to abortion (laws that were significantly underenforced) did not rest on a belief that a fertilized egg was a human being with strong moral claims. Indeed, the historians argue, the moral value attached to the fetus became a central issue in American culture and law only recently, when earlier justifications for restricting abortion had become irrelevant or ineffective. Rather, in the early part of this century, ethnocentric, nativist fears about declining birthrates among prosperous Yankee women, at a time when birthrates among lower-class women and immigrants were rising sharply, underlay anti-abortion sentiment. These fears led to passage of various laws to prevent what was referred to by alarmist elites as "race suicide." Broad bans on dissemination of information about both contraception and abortion—then being practiced by "prosperous women of good stock"—were partly designed to prevent elites from being outbred.

Now, of course, it is "prosperous women" who will have the means to avoid the impact of restrictions on abortions, while birthrates will rise among young impoverished women. According to another amicus brief, one-third of all legal abortions in 1987 were obtained by women who were unemployed; one-fourth by women less than 19 years old. These are women for whom the adverse health and social consequences of restricting legal abortions will be most severe. A 24-hour waiting requirement may not seem an undue burden to an affluent professional woman, but for an 18-year-old girl in rural North Carolina, unmarried, pregnant, struggling to finish school, and living a hundred miles from the nearest full-service hospital, the necessity of finding a way to make two lengthy trips and two overnight stays (as well as to pay for elaborate tests and obtain mandatory approvals from second doctors and hospital committees) can be a decisive barrier.

No one now suggests that it is proper for government to rely on demographic concerns in deciding either to promote or to restrict abortion. Today's pro-life advocates, unlike earlier anti-abortionists, do not support their case with any racial appeals, and are not responsible for those who did so earlier. There is, however, some tension in the position of many present conservatives who would outlaw abortion, but also spend a good deal of time complaining about the number of children born to teenagers who can't afford to support them. And many abortion foes aren't willing to promote either contraception or decent child support as a way of reducing abortions.

Questions about the historical roots of opposition to abortion are not merely academic. They bear directly on the constitutional basis of *Roe* v. *Wade*. At the root of *Roe* is the idea that a meaningful concept of fundamental "liberty" necessarily encompasses at least a presumptive protection of a person's reproductive choice. Given this premise, the question then becomes whether the state has a compelling reason for restricting that liberty. The history of the anti-abortion movement shows that the state's asserted compelling reason—the protection of human life from the moment of conception—is a notion of relatively recent currency, and is sharply contested, rather than generally accepted. As one lower federal court noted when it anticipated *Roe* v. *Wade* by invalidating Connecticut's anti-abortion statute, "A compelling state interest has generally been one where the nature of the interest was broadly accepted. . . . No decision of the Supreme Court has ever permitted anyone's constitutional right to be abridged to protect a state interest which is subject to such a variety of personal judgments." Nor should such rights be sacrificed for a "compromise" that would protect access to medically safe abortions for women in the economic class of Supreme Court justices, while relegating those less well-off to a choice between an unwanted child and a dangerous illegal operation.

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Geo. Bush vs. Geo. Washington.

SPURIOUS GEORGE

By Henry Fairlie

On the 250th anniversary of his birth, I called George Washington "the greatest man who ever lived." I did not then know that William IV, the son of George III, used precisely those words about him, and what is more, refused to qualify them after Washington died. Of other contemporary judgments, perhaps that of Abigail Adams, never easily taken in by anyone, not even her husband, is the most sufficient: "Take his character together, and we shall not look on his like again." Of today's salutes, none is better than that of his biographer, James Thomas Flexner: "The gentlest of history's great captains, one of the heroes of the human race." The sheer greatness of the man may seem to make the contrast with the 41st, 40th, 39th, 38th . . . presidents unfair. We would be foolish to expect (or even wish) every president to be a Washington. But however embarrassing the contrast, it is legitimate to examine the qualities of the first president, "his character together," which we may then justifiably take as a model in judging the presidents we elect, notably the one most recently elected.

Washington was continually in the field of action, where men usually show themselves at their worst. Set against him an Alexander, a Caesar, a Napoleon, a Lenin, and this one man, brilliant though many of the other Founding Fathers were, shines. He was the leader of a revolution both in war and peace, as general and statesman, who never (unlike most generals) cost by his actions one life more than was necessary. He was of commanding stature among his contemporaries. He was surrounded by temptations to overreach his power,

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for which he could many times have found justifications, as the Napoleons did, yet through a ceaselessly strenuous life in testing times he remained rooted in his shining humanity. That is why he is so approachable. We may contemplate him in wonder and gratitude, but not in awe. He is as we should try to be as citizens of a democracy, and as our presidents should at least try to be as his successors.

In picking out some of the qualities that enabled Washington to define the office of president, and in fact to bring the Constitution alive from the paper on which it was written, it is inevitable that one should overlook other qualities that others might choose to emphasize. The man was so various in his endowments that omission is almost dictated. Yet first among his qualities, surely, was his vision of the country. As striking as anything about him was that his eyes, for inspiration, were never turned east to Europe, unlike those of most of his contemporaries of his class. He only once left these shores, going to the West Indies on a matter of urgent family concern. He always looked to the west, from the moment he surveyed the Ohio Valley for Lord Fairfax, and beyond it to the vast continent he could imagine without seeing, and the mighty but beneficent nation that might be built there. We do not think of Washington as a great writer or even an eloquent orator. Yet his descriptions of the land he saw as a young surveyor rise to eloquence—majesty, if one likes—not least in the concrete detail of observation from which he drew and painted his picture of the promise of the beauty, fertility, grace, and sweetness of the land he saw. The emphatic lesson for our own time is that we always know from where Washington came—the land he knew and loved.

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

We in our time have not known from where Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, and now George Bush came. Nixon was—is—a kind of displaced person in his own country, whether in California or New York City: hence his consternation at the first sign of rebellion in the people, his suspicion of his fellow countrymen, his distrust and fear of rivals and even of colleagues, his lack of confidence in the democratic process. Carter was less from the South than from Annapolis, less a peanut farmer than a Navy engineer, less religious than falsely biblical: disembodied. Reagan had a vision of America, but it was a construct; the images were mythical, of a supposed and idealized American golden age—an Eden, even—to which we were to return. George Bush is no more Kennebunkport, Maine, than Midland, Texas, no more Down East than Lone Star. It is their lack of true roots in a local place that accounts for the poverty of their national vision, as in Bush's inaugural address, so that they seem to be servants only to the special interests that promote their careers. In his first hundred days Bush is, as he always has been, a butler to the interests he serves, dry cleaner to a democracy.

Another of Washington's qualities as a statesman was that he did not think it his or any government's business to check on the private lives or morals of his countrymen. In many ways a model of personal decorum, with some engaging lapses of the heart and more regularly with the bottle, he left the people generally to pursue their often unruly lives, while governing them in necessary things with his wise and austere authority. The idea of the "virtuous citizenry" that some conservatives now like to say underpinned the republican experiment is simply not borne out by any historical evidence or even by any commonsense expectations. Much went on in the homes of rich and poor alike to make one raise one's eyebrows, however primly these people walked to church on Sundays. The virtuous citizen existed only in his capacity as a citizen, exercising his freedoms, without the prying of government, and accepting his obligations to the political order that guaranteed them. Recent presidents demean their own office as well as the people by thinking it their duty to preach of "family values," or the duty of their wives (imagine Martha Washington doing it!) to instruct us, "Just say No." On drugs, crime, education, ethics in government, Bush always resorts to kind and gentle pleas for individual moral regeneration, in the absence of any willingness to confront tough policy choices, especially economic remedies, that might have

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some effect. Washington sought the hard solutions.

In an unruly time, at the birth of the nation, Washington could tolerate unruliness. When this then-experimental federal structure was endangered, Washington put his foot down, magisterially as usual, not only himself but through men like Marshall on the Supreme Court. But otherwise he understood as well as Jefferson that there must in a democracy be a "whiff of a little rebellion in the air." He could live with the untidiness of a democracy and a free people. (He had to live and march with a ragtag and bobtail of an army, constantly deserting for the summer to attend to the harvest at home.) In contrast with today's presidents, he understood the remark of the 18th-century American conservative Fisher Ames (paraphrased into modern vocabulary): the autocratic monarchies were like great ships that sailed majestically on, until they struck a rock and sank forever, whereas democracy is like a raft—it never sinks but, damn it, your feet are always in the water. Washington in his whole two terms did not distract himself, his administration, or the people by exhibiting puppies so that his presidency might be patted.

It was not only the people and the states who were unruly. No president, at least until the days preceding the Civil War, held together so many talented, factious, scheming colleagues. His eventual disdain for Jefferson (of which Jefferson in his vanity seems to have been unaware to the end), as near to bitterness as Washington could come, was provoked (justifiably) by the incapacity of Jefferson to be simply loyal. Otherwise Washington put up with and kept in harness a ministry of some of the most ambitious and brilliant men ever to compose a Cabinet, in any nation in any age. That set the standard that Bush, like his immediate predecessors, refuses to try to meet: a fully mature man as president who could act as a statesmen while allowing his colleagues to gallop sometimes in all directions. What Washington realized was that if you wish to govern well an energetic people, you must expect the people, unruly themselves, to throw up energetic and unruly leaders. They all tell you something you need to hear. The last president with this gift was of course FDR.

It is false to judge a politician by his reading. (Jefferson read too much too glibly, and often spoke and wrote too much too glibly.) Yet it is important to know that our politicians understand what literature and ideas are. Go to Mount Vernon and look at Washington's library. Or read his letters, full of obviously informed references to some classical author, drawing an example that should be followed or a warning that should be foreseen. As with all the Founding Fathers, Washington belonged to, he respected, he was *cultured* in, the heritage of Western civilization, its literature, its thought, and its history, to which the new nation was the heir.

It is now exactly 200 years since George Washington was installed as the first President of the United States, and we remember him still for "his character together." History will doubtless not be so kind to George Bush. Yet the question we have to ask about Bush's first hundred days, and about his immediate predecessors, is not what is so dismaying to one's soul about them, but what is wrong with our soul that we expect and demand no better in our leaders.

New weapons, old feuds in south Sudan.

WAR WITHOUT END

By Bill Berkeley

JUBA, THE SUDAN

Khali al-abid yakul al-abid—"Let the slave eat the slave," goes an old Sudanese saying from the 19th century, when Arab slave merchants dominated southern Sudan by pitting one black African tribe against another. Now Sudan's government has revived memories of that old slogan with its conduct in the country's six-year-old civil war. Caught up in geopolitical intrigue and tribal rivalries, and armed with modern weaponry, southern Sudan seems to be eating itself alive.

Sudan's civil war, which has killed hundreds of thousands through starvation and created some two million refugees, is usually portrayed as a conflict between the predominantly Arab and Muslim north and the black African, mostly Christian and animist, south. The many tribes of southern Sudan have indeed been waging a common war against northern political domination since 1983, when then-President Gaafar el-Nimeiry, a Muslim from northern Sudan, undertook a series of measures that effectively made southern Sudanese second-class citizens. Increasingly, however, these southern tribes have fallen to fighting among themselves. And instead of using spears and muskets, this time Sudanese are settling old scores with automatic weapons, SAM-7 missiles, land mines, and other armaments supplied by Libya and the United States—both jockeying for influence with the government—and Ethiopia, backer of the rebel Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA).

The SPLA's strategy is to destroy the government's capacity to govern in the huge and already impoverished southern half of the country. It has succeeded in gaining control of most of the south, confining government troops and officials to a few remaining outposts like Juba, the provincial capital of southern Sudan, 800 miles south of Khartoum. But hunger and indiscipline among the SPLA's 30,000 mostly illiterate rank and file have led to widespread looting and pillaging, effectively destroying not only the government's ability to govern the region but the people's ability to live in it. The rebels, like the government, have used food as a weapon, destroying crops and then blocking humanitarian efforts to deliver famine relief. Juba itself was completely isolated for two months last fall after the rebels ambushed a food convoy. The people survived on a diet of boiled water lilies and roasted rats.

The government of Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi, meanwhile, is waging a proxy war. In what looks like a repeat of the divide-and-rule strategy of the slave-

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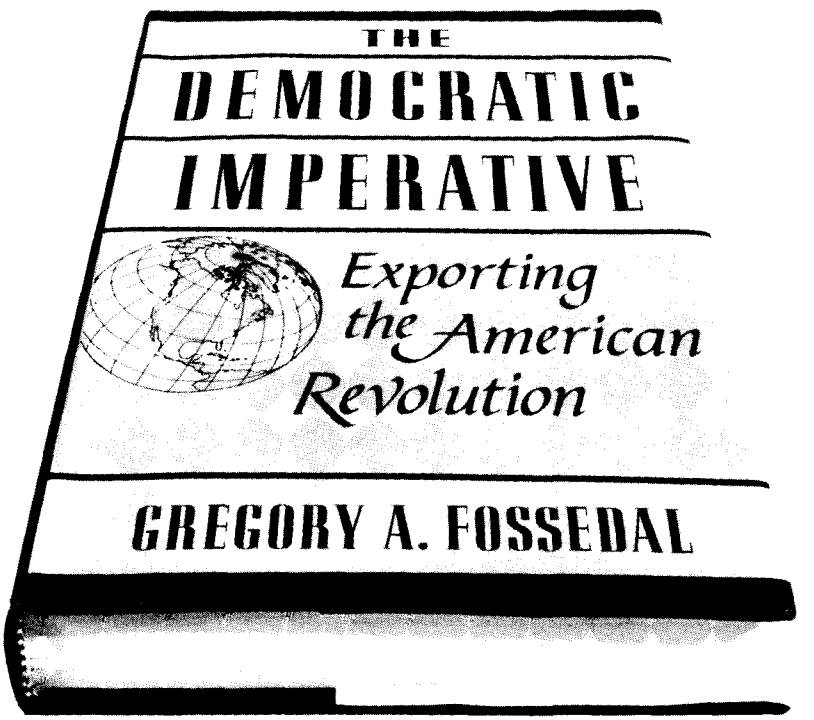

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trading days, it has created tribal militias, providing high-powered weapons and ammunition to traditional ethnic rivals of Sudan's largest southern tribe, the Dinka, who predominate in the SPLA. These modern weapons, nominally provided for self-defense against the SPLA, have ratcheted up the stakes of age-old ethnic competitions over land and cattle—conflicts that until only a few years ago were waged with sticks and spears and settled through negotiation by tribal elders. Now they are waged with automatic assault rifles and hand grenades, in an escalating cycle of attack and revenge that has led some Sudanese to speak of the "Lebanonization" of southern Sudan.

Among the earliest southern tribes to be armed by the government were the Mondari, pastoral nomadic cattle herders like their Dinka neighbors, with similar physical features. They are exceptionally tall and thin, and pitch black, with decorative scars on their foreheads. The Mondari have a reputation as a warrior tribe. Even now, amid famine, what little food is available is said to go first not to the women and children but to the young Mondari men, the warriors, on whom the rest depend. And even now the men look fit. On Christmas Day the young Mondari men, having evidently set aside their automatic weapons, dressed in leopard skins and gaudy sashes and paraded through the streets of Juba waving flags, blowing whistles, chanting traditional African call-and-response holiday greetings, and staging wrestling matches in a downtown square.

Depending on who is reciting the history of what followed after the government armed the Mondari in 1983, the Mondari either raided neighboring Dinka for their cattle or resisted SPLA raids, and the fighting continued for two years. The Mondari finally retreated with their cattle to the outskirts of Juba, where they set up camp. In 1988 the SPLA attacked the camp and drove the Mondari further into town, to a ragged assemblage of green plastic tents and thatched-roof huts barely a mile from its center. So the Mondari, in spite of—and perhaps because of—their government-sponsored militia, have been twice displaced by the war.

Most of Juba's inhabitants are no strangers to war. It was here in this country's southernmost province of Equatoria that most of the fighting occurred in Sudan's earlier 17-year civil war, which began with independence from Britain and Egypt in 1955. That war went almost completely unnoticed in the West, though it cost an estimated 500,000 lives—ten times as many as the United States lost in Vietnam during roughly the same period. Then as now, hunger was the worst killer.

On quiet nights during the current dry season, when the rebel siege has eased, it's possible to share a meal in a lightless thatched-roof café with middle-aged veterans of the old Anyanya guerrilla movement, which sought to liberate the south of Sudan and create a separate African nation. The 1972 Addis Ababa accord, which ended the 17-year war, established limited southern autonomy instead. These Equatorian Anyanya veterans will tell you that the SPLA is not much more than a Dinka tribal militia. They will say that the Equatorians like themselves initiated that earlier campaign. The Dinka, they argue, formed the SPLA to fight the government only after the government threatened to diminish Dinka power by subdividing the south into three separate provinces, a move that seemed to benefit Equatorians. The Dinka, needless to say, tell it differently.

The irony is that most southerners readily identify with the cause of the SPLA. All share the ancient and deeply held grievances of the African south against the dominant Arab north. But from this vantage point the larger issues in the war seem increasingly remote. One hears a lot of talk about how there are "no good guys," in this war, that "both sides are to blame."

For nearly six years, the government's cynical strategy of divide and rule has, in effect, been a substitute for bargaining in good faith with the SPLA. Despite Khartoum's recent overtures to the SPLA, it's unlikely that any agreement will arrest southern Sudan's cycle of violence. Even if John Garang, the SPLA's leader, manages to come to terms with the government, it is doubtful that he or any other leader can control more than a limited number of the armed combatants. The forces of anarchy have taken on a momentum of their own.

Last Christmas Day, at least, Juba seemed momentarily to forget about the war. In the camps for displaced people, men, women, and children gathered on rows of log benches under plastic canopies and celebrated the holiday with remarkable cheer. But even as mass was being held in the Lologo camp on the outskirts of town, the singing was disrupted by the blast of an exploding land mine. SPLA rebels had entered the camp on Christmas Eve and kidnapped a dozen young women and boys. They had covered their tracks with mines and four people stepped on them the next day. All were killed. For a bemused Equatorian relief worker, the news seemed to capture the war in microcosm. "The government wants the people in the south to die," he said. "And the SPLA has done the government's job for them."

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Peacekeeping, Syrian-style.

BLOOD BROTHERS

By Robert F. Haddad

As Lebanon's war enters its 15th year, Beirut's chronic wretchedness has abruptly deepened into acute agony. Massive bombardments—from tank guns, multibarreled rocket launchers, and 240mm howitzers—are pounding residential areas of the city, bringing unspeakable terror and (for

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some) a kind of desperate exaltation.

This time it is Syria's "peacekeeping" forces that, with the help of the Lebanese Druze militia, are fighting the Christian Lebanese Army. (There are multiple ironies in this, the most obvious being that when the Syrians entered Lebanon for their present sojourn, way back in 1976, it was at the invitation of Christians, who hoped the Syrians would protect them from armed Palestinians in their midst.) The current episode began on March 7, when Gen. Michel Aoun, a Christian and the disputed head of a Lebanese Cabinet, imposed a naval and aerial blockade against illegal ports operated by various Muslim militias along the coast south of Beirut. A few days earlier, Aoun had forcibly closed the illegal ports operated by the Lebanese Forces, a Christian militia. By closing the illegal ports, Aoun hoped to regain control over the customs revenues of the legal port of Beirut, and to assert the authority of his beleaguered government. This threatened all the militias, who use their ports to tax incoming goods, to import weapons, and to export drugs and sometimes terrorists.

The existence of competing Cabinets in Beirut echoes the de facto partition of the country. When the Lebanese Parliament failed to elect a president to succeed Amin Gemayel, in September 1988, Gemayel designated Aoun to be "emergency prime minister," with quasi-presidential powers. Aoun is the legitimate leader according to the letter of the Lebanese Constitution. However, an equally important although unwritten instrument of Lebanese politics, the National Pact of 1943, allocates the presidency to the Maronite Christians and the prime ministership to Sunni Muslims. Thus most Muslims do not recognize Aoun's legitimacy and have continued to support Salim al-Hoss, who was acting prime minister until Gemayel's last week in office, as head of the Cabinet.

The fighting in Beirut has been viewed in the United States mostly as another horrifying example of the apparently infinite Lebanese propensity for meaningless violence. Few remember that a generation ago Lebanon was a peaceful and prosperous nation that, by Arab standards, enjoyed an unrivaled degree of openness and democracy. Christians and Muslims shared power—although the Christians, once the larger community, had, so to speak, the lion's share. Conflict erupted when the Muslims, having become the majority, sought a more equitable political arrangement. A crosscutting rivalry has pitted the Sunni Muslims against the now more numerous Shiites. All this conflict has since been exploited by the PLO, Syria, Israel, Iran, and, more recently, Iraq, each of which sponsors or supports militias in Lebanon to advance its own interests.

Few in Lebanon, Christian or Muslim, are opposed to political reforms, and most believe that closing down the illegal ports is a prerequisite to peace. But the impediments to peace, domestic and external, are formidable. Internally, the habit of war has become a kind of addiction. To the generation born during the war, "peace" has no meaning, beyond perhaps a cease-fire. Children in Beirut exchange spent bullets and artillery shells the way American kids trade baseball cards. Adults, having little faith in the reality of the future, commonly chain-smoke cigarettes, drink excessively, and numb themselves with anti-depressants and other drugs. Struggling to make sense of an absurdly violent environment, each side has demonized the other, so that the once prosperous, dynamic, and hospitable Lebanese have been reduced to frightened and paranoid groupings. While longing for peace, they fear and suspect any peaceful overture as a subterfuge for conquest or even annihilation. Moderate, reform-minded leaders are perceived as weak and ineffective, while extremists who prey on people's fears are idolized as liberators.

Many attempts have been made over the years to break this vicious and cynical cycle of violence. Each time, Syria has moved to scuttle any prospect for peace by kindling mistrust and violence among the Lebanese. Each time, Syria has blunted Lebanese and international outcry against its meddling in Lebanon by arming and encouraging the Lebanese to fight while itself appearing as the conciliator, the dispassionate and honest broker. Aoun is far from the first Lebanese leader be a target of Syrian wrath, and he can at least take comfort that it's nothing personal. The Syrians, it is generally agreed, played a role in the assassinations of the Christian President-elect Bashir Gemayel in 1982 and the Druze leader Kamal Jumblatt in 1976.

The past month has amply demonstrated both Syrian cunning and U.S. willingness to fall for it. While it is the Syrian army, aided only by the small Druze militia, that is fighting Christian contingents of the Lebanese army, the State Department refuses to address the destabilizing Syrian role in Lebanon, putting out lame statements that cover up the involvement of Damascus ("We are deeply concerned over the heavy exchange of shelling . . . and are calling on all parties to negotiate their differences," etc.). This sort of mealymouthed talk can only embolden the Syrian ruler, Hafez al-Assad.

Indeed, U.S. indifference to the Syrian role in Lebanon masks a disturbing development in U.S. relations with the Syrians, who, since the failed Reagan policy in Lebanon, have been given carte blanche in that unhappy country. Reagan in effect wrote off Lebanon and refocused U.S. attention on other regional issues, such as the Iran-Iraq war and links with the PLO. The implicit trade-off was that in exchange for a grant of autonomy in Lebanon, Syria would desist from sabotaging U.S. interests elsewhere in the Middle East. It was also hoped that Damascus would deliver the U.S. hostages and curb the various terrorist groups that operate in Lebanon. That is why neither the United States nor any of the other Western powers (many of which also have hostages in Lebanon) have challenged Syria.

Lebanon would present no military threat to Syria should Assad's troops return home. But many fruits can be harvested from an indefinite occupation of a divided and chaotic Lebanon. Assad, who is an Alawite Muslim, a member of a small schismatic sect that encompasses only about 12 percent of the Syrian population, is not much liked by his people. He came to power in a military coup in 1970, and has championed the Palestinian cause (in words rather than deeds) to legitimize his dictatorial rule. Involvement in Lebanon, ostensibly to confront the Israelis, is a source of domestic pride, much like

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Cuban involvement in Angola. It distracts the Syrian people from their desires for color TVs and for more political participation, reinforcing the lesson of Hama, the dissident Syrian city leveled by Assad's tanks in 1982 at a cost of 20,000 dead.

Nor does occupying Lebanon have to cost much money. When Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and other Gulf states cut off their financial aid to Assad in response to his support of the Ayatollah in the Iran-Iraq war, the Syrian regime subsidized its occupation of Lebanon by expanding the drug networks in the Bekaa valley, where farmers who once raised watermelons and potatoes now tend poppy fields and labor in heroin processing plants. The drugs, exported through the illegal ports with the help of various militias, make for a lucrative business. There is little risk of retribution from the United States and Western Europe, where the drugs go, because as long as Lebanon is in chaos no government has to take the blame.

Assad gets other kinds of political mileage from his rule over a divided Lebanon. While his own border with Israel is quiet, the Israeli-Lebanese border is the scene of almost weekly skirmishes between Israeli troops and Palestinian commandos trained in camps in the Syrian-controlled Bekaa. Assad can thus proclaim to his people and to the Arab world that he alone is true to the Palestinian cause. And he can remind the Israelis that without Syria there will be no peace in the Middle East.

The continuing tragedy of the hostages bears the same imprint. Assad claims that he cannot gain their release because his troops are not in control of Lebanon. Yet whenever a hostage is released, a rare enough occasion, he is quickly whisked off to Damascus, where, in front of the cameras, a Syrian foreign ministry official claims the credit for his freedom. The hostage issue, coupled with terrorism originating in Damascus (the bombing of the Pan Am flight over Scotland is a recent example), is a reminder that pampering Hafez al-Assad will neither contain the violence in Lebanon nor prevent terrorism originating from there. Eventually the Bush administration will realize that peace is not going to come to Lebanon as long as Syrian "peacekeepers" are there, and that until they leave the drugs and terrorists will keep flowing out. But by then George Bush's term will probably be almost over, and Assad will get a new lease on Lebanon.

While prospects for peace in Lebanon would be greatly enhanced if the Syrians were to leave, the Lebanese understand that they are too weak to drive them out. General Aoun is gambling that his violent showdown with Syria will somehow put Lebanon back on the world's and especially Washington's agenda. Many of Aoun's supporters welcome the violence with something like ecstasy, imagining that one last apocalypse will accomplish what years of skirmishing has not.

But even if Aoun succeeds in getting Washington's attention, there is not very much the United States can do. It can unequivocally blame the Syrians for their destabilizing role and urge them to withdraw from Lebanon. And it can encourage Aoun, whose army the United States groomed and trained, to come up with a specific plan—a new National Pact that would allow each Lebanese group to oversee its own internal affairs and would safeguard both Syrian and Israeli interests in Lebanon by preventing the establishment of foreign bases. Unfortunately, Hafez al-Assad will almost certainly oppose any such solution, and until he is given a reason to change his mind, Lebanon's suffering is unlikely to end.

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The slow self-destruction of Ed Koch.

MAYOR CULPA

By Joseph B. Rose

New York's Mayor Ed Koch recently spent a day before a state commission on government integrity vehemently denying that the affirmative action program run by his closest aides was really a patronage mill for his political allies. Stubbornly ignoring testimony about destroyed files, erased data, and surprise resignations of senior officials, he refused to concede the obvious and hardly earth-shattering fact that some city jobs had been given for political purposes—one to a fellow so inept that he was bounced from several positions before falling down a hatch on the first day of his new job as a deckhand on the Staten Island Ferry.

While most political observers shrugged off Koch's minor patronage scandal as part of big city politics, Koch himself knew that something far more serious than a few jobs was at stake. His whole career rests on

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his public identity as a courageous political reformer, and abolishing patronage is one of the basic principles of the reformer's creed. In fact, Koch's autobiographical treatise on government, *Politics*, begins with the flat statement that "[Patronage] is simply not the best way to run a government." All of Koch's victories have been built on his professed ethical superiority to the machine politicians he displaced. Conceding that he, too, is subject to the same gravitational forces as other politicians might deny him the unprecedented fourth term that he desperately wants. It might also expose the flaws of the reform style of urban politics he has publicly championed during the three decades since he rose to prominence by helping to defeat the Tammany Hall political machine that had governed New York City for more than a century.

In the late 1950s, the middle- and working-class Irish and Italians who had been the source of Tammany's strength left Manhattan for Queens and the suburbs. They were replaced by poor blacks and Puerto Ricans and by well-educated young professionals—many of them Jewish—who saw little appeal in machine politics. Tammany politicians, either unable or unwilling to adapt to their new constituents, were increasingly challenged by ambitious, young reform-minded lawyers. Previous Tammany foes such as Fiorello La Guardia had captured the mayoralty by forming coalitions of groups alienated by the Democratic machine; the new reformers set out to dismantle the Tammany apparatus from within by capturing the party offices and district leaderships that had enabled the machine to survive scandals, electoral reversals, and frequent political miscalculations.

Reformers dismissed as outdated the service-oriented clubhouses of the machine's autocratic district leaders, who handed out city jobs and contracts in exchange for political loyalty. They wanted instead an ideological, issue-driven party that arrived at its positions democratically after lengthy debates conducted in strict accord with parliamentary procedure. All economic incentives for political participation, the lifeblood of Tammany, were considered immoral. Rebuffed in its attempt to compromise with the unyielding reformers, the machine fell apart as its demographic base deteriorated.

It was in this environment of reform success that Ed Koch gained notice. After a brief flirtation with the local Tammany organization, which offered little hope for the quick success he craved, Koch had become the leader of the purist "hair shirt" faction of Manhattan's most militant reform club. His first electoral victory came when he thwarted former Tammany boss Carmine Desapio's 1963 attempt at a political comeback as district leader of Greenwich Village. Koch was able to parlay the publicity from his narrow victory into a City Council post and then the congressional seat vacated by John Lindsay. This pattern was repeated, if less spectacularly, by other reformers in Manhattan's middle-class areas. By the end of the decade liberal reformers had become Manhattan's political elite, sharing power with Harlem's black political establishment, though quarantined from the regular Democratic organizations in the other boroughs, where Manhattan politics was regarded as at best irrelevant, and at worst dangerously contagious.

The reformers might have gone on playing gadfly to the machine politicians from other boroughs who dominated the City Council and the State Assembly, or screaming at the upstate Republicans who controlled the state Senate and staking out the left side of the political spectrum in Congress. But when Abe Beame, the clubhouse mayor beholden to the powerful Brooklyn Democratic machine of cigar-chomping boss Meade Esposito, proved unable to handle the city's deepening financial disaster, New York politics became a free-for-all. Disgusted by an administration that had allowed the city to reach the brink of bankruptcy, New Yorkers looked for new leaders. With the assistance of former Miss America Bess Myerson and media consultant David Garth, Ed Koch clawed his way ahead of many better-known candidates into a runoff primary with fledgling Queens politician Mario Cuomo. Koch had prevailed by continuing to stress his image as an incorruptible reformer who would stand up to the hacks who had brought the city to its knees; he also played up demagogic issues like the death penalty that would have shocked his former liberal political allies in Manhattan.

Faced with a tough battle against Cuomo, Koch came to an arrangement with the Brooklyn and Bronx machines that had gone down to defeat with the hapless Beame. Esposito and Bronx power-broker Stanley Friedman sized up Koch's reformer rhetoric as the veneer of an intensely ambitious candidate and delivered the disciplined machine support that carried Koch to a narrow victory in the runoff and general elections.

The negotiation of this expedient alliance would not have been out of the ordinary had Koch and his aides not insisted that it be kept a strict secret. Koch proudly recounts in his memoirs that he "was running without the endorsements of the county leaders, the banks, or the landlords." Among his reform allies, Koch had regularly referred to Esposito as a "gangster" who exemplified the shady bosses they had all sought to defeat. The silent arrangement with Esposito displayed the hypocrisy that has since characterized Koch's public persona: claiming to act only according to the purest of reform principles while cutting whatever deal is convenient. Ed Koch had come a long way from the defense of his extreme reformism in a 1962 letter to the *Village Voice*: "[We must be] the beacons of light, pompous as that might sound . . . there is always the hope that some day the voting public will say that politics need not be the dirty game that it always seems to have been; that it need not contain within it moral lepers who will sell their integrity for the promise of a job, or public or party office designation."

Fulfilling his 1977 contract with Esposito sowed the seeds of the corruption scandals that have plagued Koch throughout his third term. Having established screening panels of good-government advocates to advise on his first administration's senior appointments, Koch promptly disbanded them when they interfered with his obligations to the Brooklyn machine. The most flagrant Koch payoff was his naming of Esposito protégé Anthony Ameruso as transportation commissioner. Overriding his own panel's list of 12 nominees and ignoring

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their judgment that Ameruso was unqualified, the newly elected mayor delivered control over the city's roads, bridges, tunnels, and parking tickets to Esposito cronies. Koch's diminutive sidekick John LoCicero and Esposito lieutenant Anthony Genovesi then conspired to place as many hacks as possible on the city's many obscure but profitable authorities and commissions. The practical bosses realized that high-profile offices were neither available nor necessary: they wanted cash, not influence on public policy. By divvying up agencies such as the Parking Violations Bureau, the Taxi and Limousine Commission, and the Bureau of Ferry Operations, the machines could conduct business without attracting attention.

While Koch may have secretly forsaken his reformer's antipathy for patronage, he lost none of the zeal with which he had demonized his Tammany opponents at the start of his career. Just as Koch had vilified his Tammany foes as "crooks" and "moral lepers," he attacked his own good-government screening panels as Manhattan "elitists" and anti-Italian "bigots," his critics in the black and Hispanic communities as "poverty pimps," and neighborhood groups as "crazies" who could only scream "not in my back yard." To be sure, occasionally some of these epithets were appropriate. Nonetheless, the scorched-earth approach to political debate that Koch had refined in Greenwich Village was now routinely directed at anyone who merely disagreed with New York's self-styled "Mayatollah."

Capitalizing on a surging local economy, a divided opposition, and the numerous fears and prejudices of New York's heterogeneous population, Koch won two overwhelming re-election victories. But after 11-and-a-half years of name-calling, deceptions, and broken promises, polls show that New Yorkers are finally fed up with the man who wants to be "mayor forever." Now facing numerous challengers, many with strong electoral bases of their own, Koch is left alone with his machine allies, hoping his opponents so bloody themselves that he can maneuver his way into a fourth term with only a small plurality.

Koch's current bleak prospects are not uncommon for someone who has managed to govern New York City for 12 years; even the legendary La Guardia's third term became mired in petty corruption scandals. What is exceptional, to many observers, is only Koch's refusal to recognize his own political mortality. But Koch's career is also a parable about the dangers of reform politics.

To a remarkable degree, Koch's career has confirmed political scientist James Q. Wilson's early suspicions that reformers might not be the saviors of city government they considered themselves. Wilson's 1962 book, *The Amateur Democrat*, warned that reform politicians would either have to forsake their principles for broader political successes outside their middle-class enclaves or remain self-righteous gadflies. Wilson identified the reformer's characteristic thirst for divisive political issues and knack for viciously condemning opponents as a dangerous combination. Coupled with Koch's personal desire for political success at all costs, they proved particularly toxic.

Freed from the constraints of Manhattan liberalism, Koch has seized on issues like the restoration of the death penalty and fanned the city's ethnic and racial animosities to mobilize political support. When he tried to reform the anti-poverty programs and health systems—breaking campaign promises in the process—that had long been the patronage preserves of the city's black political establishment, he encountered a fierce backlash. Instead of trying to accommodate elements of the community and adopt a conciliatory tone while pressing on with his reforms, the mayor lashed out at the "poverticians" who had attacked him.

Koch discovered that his denunciations of "special treatment" for blacks played well outside Manhattan, and since then he has rarely passed up an opportunity to capitalize on the city's ethnic polarization. Black politicians soon found themselves scorned with the same vigor he had once directed at Tammany. Harlem Congressman Charles Rangel, once a Koch supporter, became convinced that this was not by accident: "He happens to be bright, he is witty, he is a politician, and he knows how to win—you put all that together and you get a sense that this son of a bitch is not just insensitive."

Though the mayor's former liberal allies argue that such behavior is at odds with his reform roots, Wilson has suggested that such tactics are a necessary result of renouncing the machine's patronage-driven sources of political loyalty: "The need to employ issues as incentives . . . will mean that political conflict will be intensified, social cleavages will be exaggerated, party leaders will tend to be men skilled in rhetorical arts." Koch had merely adapted his choice of issues to a larger demographic base than his original Greenwich Village constituency.

Even more destructive has been the failure of the reform ideology to train its adherents in the essential activity of urban politics: the negotiation of reasonable compromises. Reformers came of age arguing that all deals are dishonorable—a natural conclusion if you first demonize your opponents. Deprived of a publicly defensible means of compromise, Koch still needed the aid of people outside his small virtuous circle. Thus, the secret deals that he made with Esposito et al. obligated him in a way that publicly acknowledged alliances might never have. And they gave the machines he had started out to displace a firm handle on his administration.

Koch's public posture, on the other hand, has remained intransigent. Unable to antagonize the political machines that have kept him in power, he has instead displayed his rigid virtue by treating every government decision as a matter of principle and refusing to accommodate even the most reasonable opponents. The mayor who boasts in his memoirs of how, as an ambitious congressman, he had incited a crowd of Queens residents to oppose a low-income housing project by saying, "Keep up the fight—you can turn City Hall around. They can't impose this on you. It's wrong," now routinely dismisses all community opposition to any of his policies. As mayor, he has done an about-face and crammed thousands of homeless into mid-Manhattan welfare hotels. And when city residents

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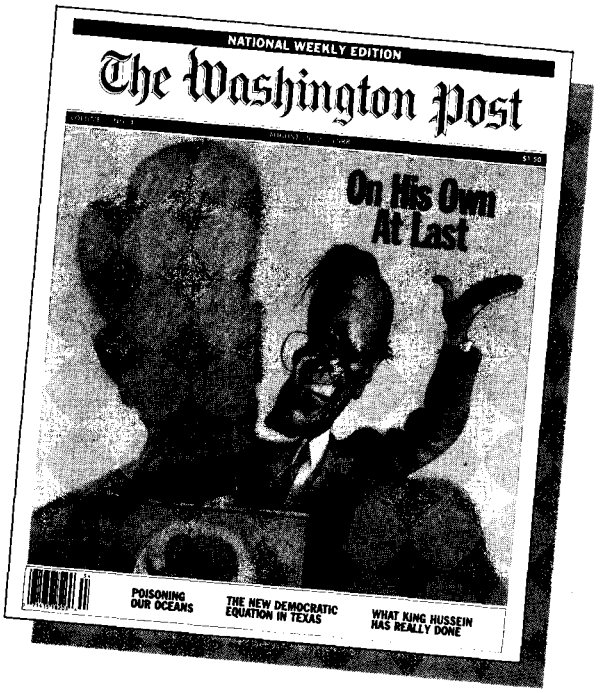
—Roger Mudd,
The McNeil/Lehrer News Hour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complained about the mayor's plan to erect an 80-story tower that would overshadow Central Park, he mocked them, leaving the issue to be solved in a long and costly lawsuit that the city eventually lost.

New Yorkers now find themselves stuck with the worst elements of two kinds of politics and none of their virtues: they have the corruption of the machine without its sensitivity to local concerns, and the strident moralism of reform without the solace of honest government. After more than four years of Koch's angry denials of his administration's improprieties in the face of vast contradictory evidence, more than one New Yorker has waxed nostalgic for the cheerful candor of turn-of-the-century Tammany politician George Washington Plunkitt's boast that "I seen my opportunities and I took 'em."

While Ed Koch may be the most visible reformer to have fallen from his white horse, he is far from the only one. In the New York State Legislature and other legislative bodies, countless politicians who came of age in the reform era have seen their reputations tarnished by scandal and corruption. No fewer than one-quarter of all state Senate Democrats have been placed either under indictment or on trial, or convicted of crimes, this year alone. That wouldn't have surprised Plunkitt, who as a member of the state Senate some 80 years earlier had observed: "When the reformers are out they raise the yell that Tammany men should be sent to jail. When they get in, they're so busy keepin' out of jail themselves that they don't have no time to attack Tammany."

Were New York not in such dire need of responsible leadership, the antics of the professed reformers might be amusing. But the city's government has just been declared unconstitutional. The Supreme Court found that the unique Board of Estimate, which allows each borough an equal say in governing the city despite unequal populations, violates the principle of one person, one vote. For almost a century, borough bosses have traded favors and haggled over budgets, contracts, and land-use decisions. Now the city will have to confront a crumbling infrastructure, deplorable schools, the AIDS epidemic, and an acute crime wave in the midst of the urban equivalent of a constitutional crisis. Only by recognizing that municipal government is not a crusade, but a delicate balancing of competing interests that requires compromise and tact, can the city hope to maintain its position as the world's capital. The next mayor will need the goodwill to ask for collective sacrifice and the credibility to be taken at his word. He must be willing to accept reality in lieu of tribute to his own sublime personal fantasies.

Success comes to South Shore, Chicago.

A POVERTY PROGRAM THAT WORKS

By David Osborne

Picture a black urban community of 80,000 in which crime, drug abuse, and unemployment have reached such levels that landlords are deserting their buildings rather than trying to sell them. Now picture the same neighborhood 15 years later, with $160 million in new investments, 350 large apartment buildings rehabilitated, and property values rising five to seven percent a year. Hundreds of businesses have started, and thousands of people have received remedial education, job training, and job placement. The community is stable, crime is down, and the crack epidemic hasn't taken root. Yet none of this has been accomplished through gentrification. The community is still 99 percent black. Rents are still fairly low. People on welfare can still afford to move in.

Now imagine that all this is the result of an anti-poverty program that cost only $10 million to $12 million. If this were a government program, we would have replicated it a thousand times and declared victory in the war on poverty. But it isn't, so we have virtually ignored it.

The "program" is the Shorebank Corporation, in Chicago's South Shore neighborhood. Shorebank is a holding company that includes a bank, a real estate development corporation, a small venture capital firm, and something called The Neighborhood Institute, which does low-income housing development, remedial education, vocational training, and the like. Within a small circle of foundation people and anti-poverty activists, Shorebank is legendary. In Washington it is almost unknown. Yet it is the perfect model for the 1990s: inexpensive, market-oriented, and entrepreneurial.

Because it is subsidized by philanthropists, Shorebank does something the private sector normally cannot do: it makes investments whose returns are often slim to nonexistent. Because it is a business that will go under if it makes too many bad investments, it does something government normally cannot do: it invests only in people who have the savvy and commitment to succeed, whether by starting a business, acquiring a skill and a job, or buying and renovating an apartment building.

DAVID OSBORNE is the author of *Laboratories of Democracy*, published last year by Harvard Business School Press.

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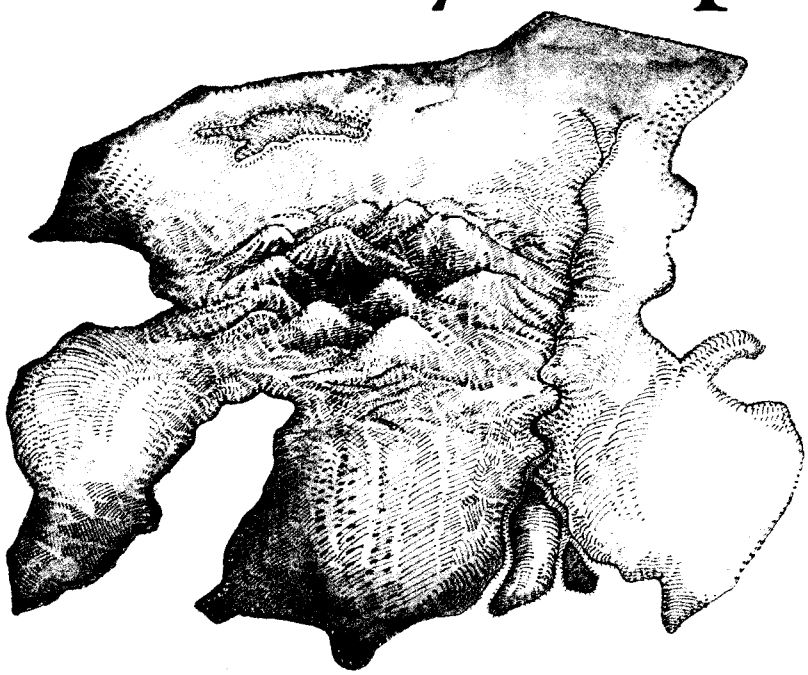
Why You Won't Find This Great State On Any Map.



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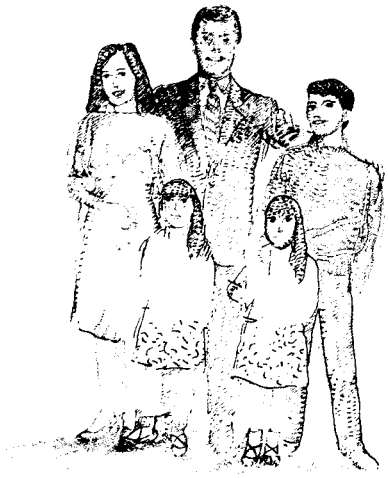
Because The State Of Life Insurance Isn't

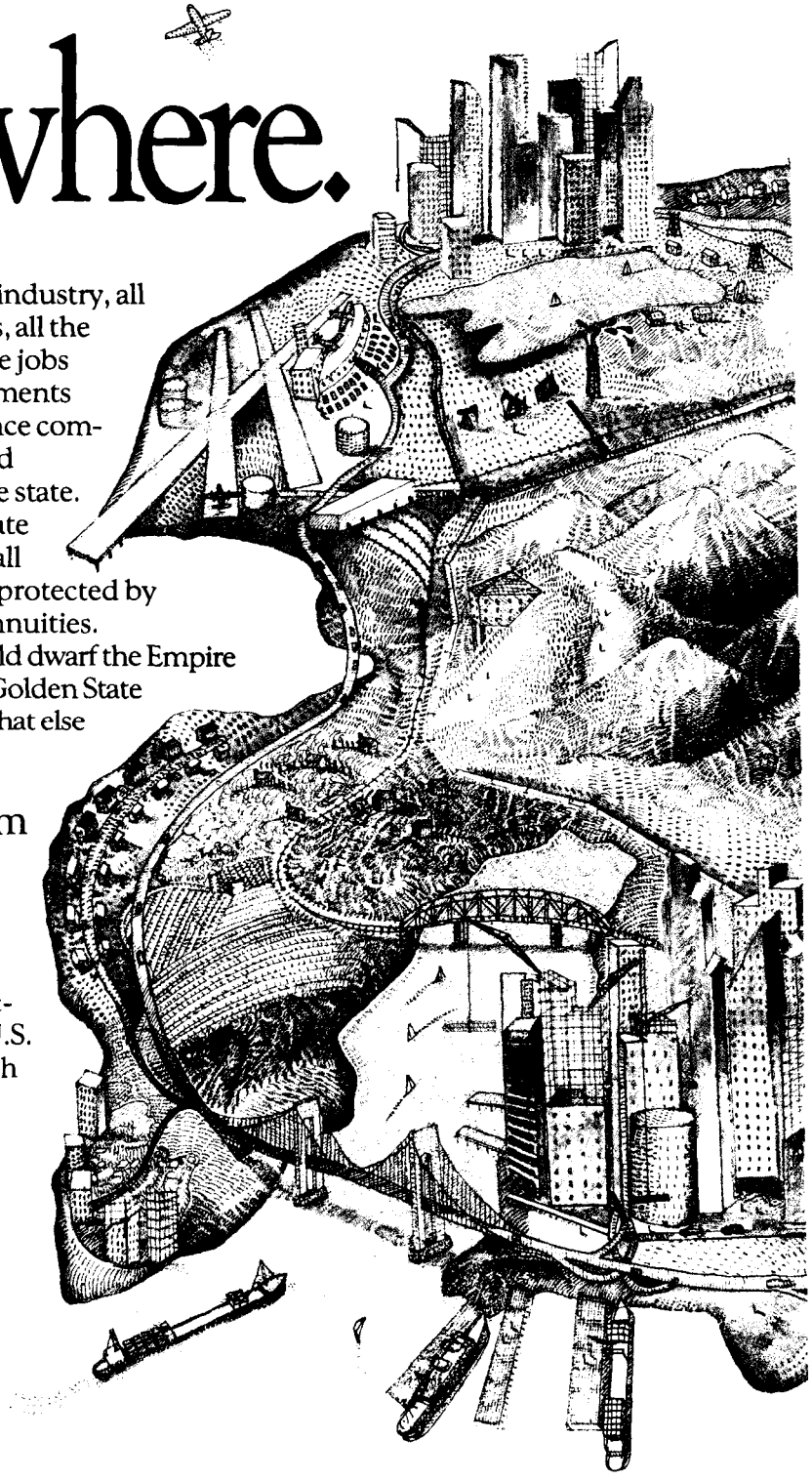
It's Everywhere.



Imagine if all the industry, all the small businesses, all the buildings, and all the jobs generated by investments made by life insurance companies were gathered together into a single state.

Imagine if that state were populated by all the people who are protected by life insurance and annuities.

Such a state would dwarf the Empire State and make the Golden State lose much of its luster. What else would you call it but the State of Security?



The Great State of Security grows from the state of security enjoyed by over 155 million Americans who own life insurance and annuities.

Today, far more families enjoy far more protection than ever before. Eighty-one percent of all U.S. households have some form of life insurance, with an average coverage of $110,000.

There are few better bargains. Since 1960, the cost of living has increased 300%, while the cost per $1000 of life insurance coverage has actually come down by 30%.

How big is the Capital of the State of Security?

By providing 12% of the available funds for America's capital markets (the second largest private sector source), life insurance companies

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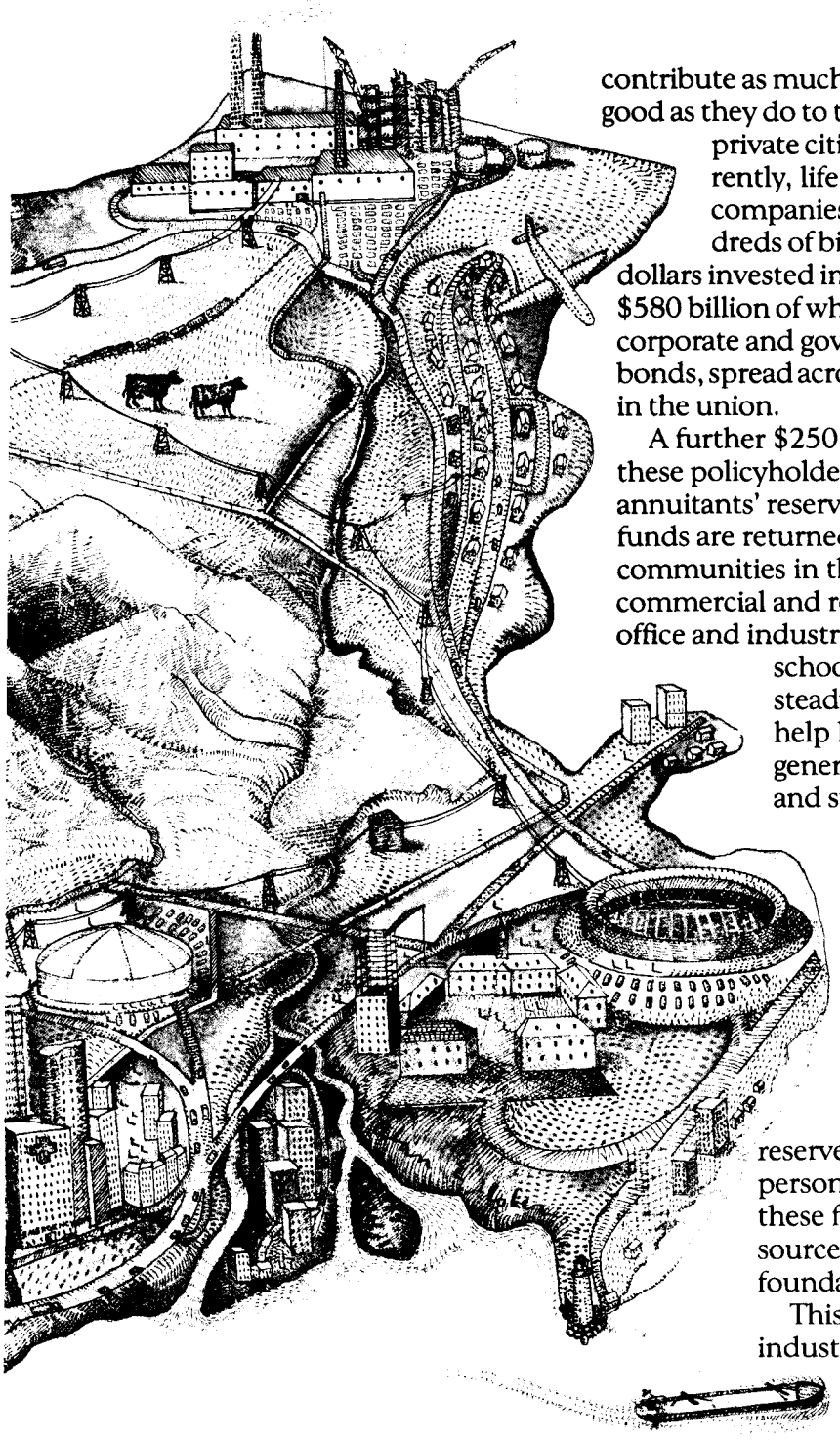
Security Built By Anywhere.



contribute as much to the public good as they do to the security of private citizens. Currently, life insurance companies have hundreds of billions of dollars invested in America, over $580 billion of which is held in corporate and government bonds, spread across every state in the union.

A further $250 billion of these policyholders' and annuitants' reserve funds are returned to communities in the form of commercial and residential mortgages and direct investments for office and industrial buildings, stores, homes, hospitals, and schools. Thus the life insurance industry provides a steady source of funds to modernize America and help keep interest rates reasonable. All of this generates work for builders, laborers, suppliers, and subcontractors.

As you see, every insurance policy has two beneficiaries: the family who buys it, and the nation's economy.

The State of Security benefits not just a few of us, but all of us.

In a time when the U.S. savings rate compares so unfavorably to that of other countries, increases in life insurance and private pension reserves account for over one third of all long-term personal savings in the U.S. Unlike foreign sources, these funds provide a particularly stable and reliable source of long-term capital — capital that serves as a foundation for America's future economic growth.

This constant cycling of funds from families to industry and back to families and their communities makes life insurance America's greatest industry for growth.

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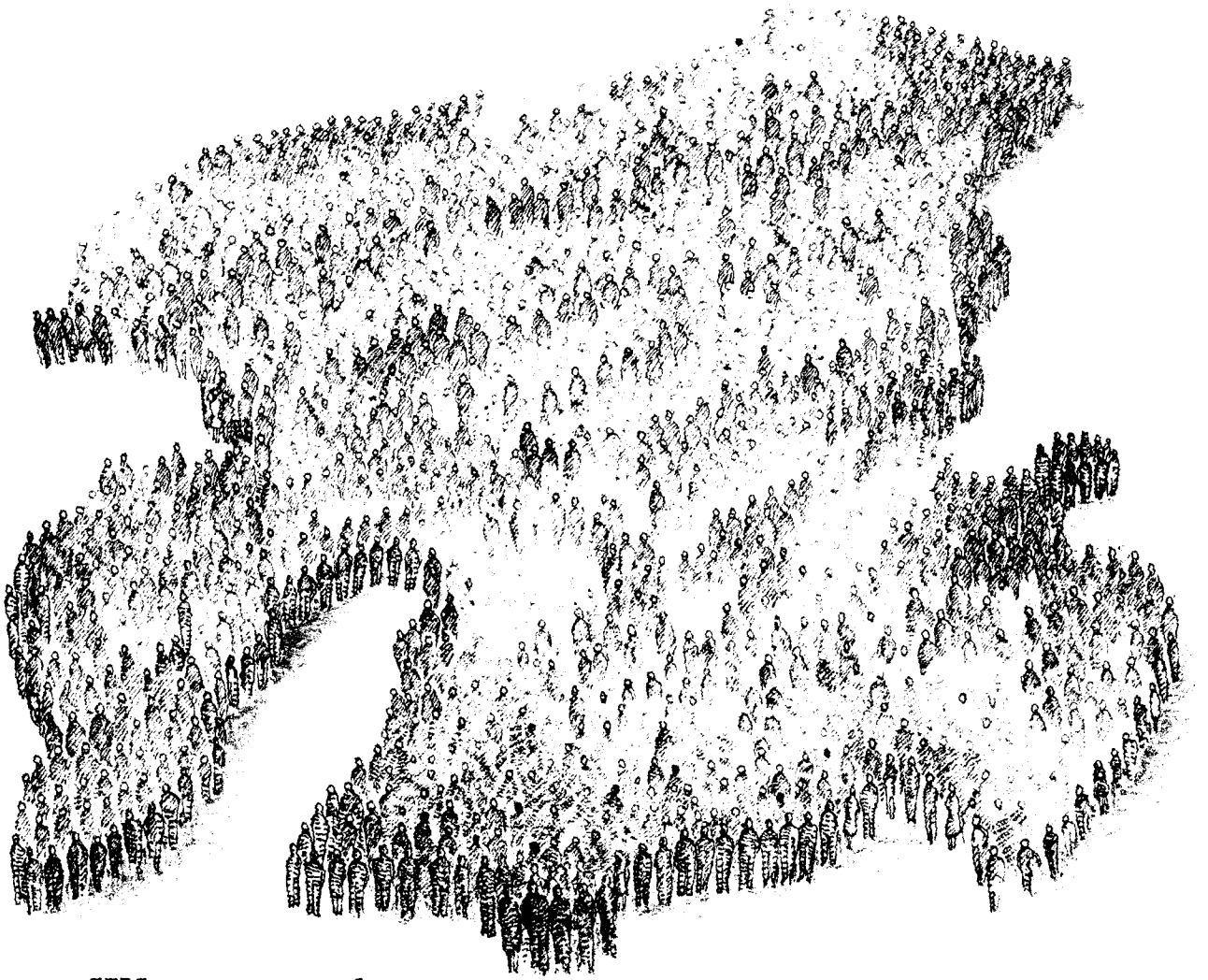

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Government normally spends its money in response to community desires, political clout, or need. Shorebank seeks out those who can thrive in the marketplace, then gives them support. In the long run, success in the marketplace—not good intentions or piles of money—is what improves people's lives.

Shorebank's one big weakness is that although it pays for itself, it is not profitable enough to convince other entrepreneurs with capital to imitate its success. After 15 years, it is clear that the Shorebank model will not spread unless the public sector is willing to invest.

Shorebank was the brainchild of Ron Grzywinski, a graying 53-year-old who looks and talks more like a scholar than an entrepreneur. In the late 1960s Grzywinski owned a small bank in Hyde Park, home of the University of Chicago. Adlai Stevenson III was state treasurer. Searching for a way to help the ghettos, Stevenson decided to deposit state funds only in banks that agreed to create units specializing in minority business lending. Grzywinski asked Milton Davis, a former Chicago chairman of the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE), to run his minority business program. "We were getting tired of sitting in and getting thrown out by the Chicago police, and we were discussing what else we could do," Davis remembers. "But I must confess it had never occurred to me that a bank might be a vehicle."

Davis hired Jim Fletcher, a black assistant director in the federal Community Action Program—who, like Davis, had no experience in banking. Grzywinski hired Mary Houghton, a white 27-year-old graduate of the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. Together, the four of them made the program work. "Because we were running something that was less torpid and more serious than the large banks were, we outperformed them," says Houghton. "And we just got to thinking, 'Well, if we can do this trick, what would be the next trick?' "

Chicago is often considered the most segregated city in America. Residents joke that the definition of integration is the period between the arrival of the first black family and the departure of the last white family. When neighborhoods go from white to black, banks and other institutions normally quit investing, hastening the slide into decay and depopulation. Watching this happen all around Hyde Park, Grzywinski and company began talking about how to reverse the process, how to bring capital back into black communities. Gradually the idea of using a bank as the stable, profit-making base for other development efforts emerged. Grzywinski wrote an offering circular that, in his words, "said we were trying to raise $4 million in common stock, in units of $160,000 each, to purchase an unknown bank in an unknown neighborhood, to test an untested idea."

When South Shore Bank came on the market, Grzywinski had raised only $800,000. But the opportunity was too good to resist. Only a few miles south of Hyde Park, the South Shore neighborhood was not yet too far gone to help. As a white community, it had been middle and upper-middle class, with single-family homes of all sizes and gracious, red brick apartment buildings from the 1920s. It was bordered by Lake Michigan on the west and a park on the north and was only 15 minutes from downtown Chicago. Despite a 98 percent racial turnover in the preceding decade, the neighborhood was still perhaps two-thirds middle and working class, only one-third underclass.

For all its amenities, however, South Shore was headed rapidly downhill. "There were no loans being made," says James Lowell, community affairs manager for the Federal Reserve Board. "The bank wanted to pull out; it did not want to deal with black people, period. The neighborhood was going to lose its park, because the city felt it was just going to be a crime hazard. The shoreline was becoming a disaster area. A lot of those old, beautiful buildings were just crumbling. An awful lot of units had been walked away from."

Dorris Pickens, the president of Shorebank's Neighborhood Institute, has lived in South Shore since 1970. She and her husband—then a lineman for the Chicago Bears—were among the thousands of blacks who moved to South Shore because it was an attractive neighborhood, only to see the bottom drop out. "When we moved in," she says, "I bet 70 percent of the people on our block were white. And they just left. They didn't say goodbye, they just disappeared. It was like they moved out at night."

In 1973 Grzywinski and his colleagues bought the bank, putting down their $800,000 and borrowing the rest—more than $2.4 million. They launched a variety of aggressive lending programs: single-family mortgages, small-business loans, consumer loans. The mortgage lending worked. Though not one other bank or savings and loan would lend in the neighborhood—bankers had reflexively begun redlining as soon as the neighborhood went black—Shorebank had no problem with foreclosures, and by 1980 other institutions had entered the market.

Most of Shorebank's other efforts failed, however. Between 1974 and 1980 Grzywinski and his colleagues loaned $6.7 million and provided heavy technical support to small businesses. Outside of loans to McDonald's franchises, the results were dismal. Most of the businesses went under, and by 1980, 71st Street, the main shopping strip, looked worse than it had in 1973. With small stores and little parking—not to mention threatening teenagers loitering on the sidewalks—71st Street merchants could not compete with the shopping malls. The most dramatic failure came when a black merchant located catercorner from the bank—who was one of Shorebank's first and most promising borrowers—tied up two Small Business Administration employees who had come to foreclose on him and burned down his building, with them inside.

Throughout the '70s the bank limped along, its profits in the bottom 25 percent of all banks, federal examiners pressuring its managers to tighten up their loan portfolios. As high interest rates buffeted the Rustbelt economy, two black-owned banks on the edge of the neighborhood failed. South Shore Bank survived primarily through the invention of what it called "development deposits": large deposits made by institutions and wealthy individuals who shared the bank's social goals. Some depositors accept below-market rates to subsidize Shorebank's work, but generally these deposits offer

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market rates of interest. Even so, it took an intensive nationwide effort to attract them, since the bank's neighborhood wasn't exactly filled with eager depositors. Today development deposits account for almost half of the bank's $150 million deposit base.

Gradually it became clear that the key to stabilizing the neighborhood wasn't so much reviving its commercial areas as rehabilitating the apartment buildings that housed 70 percent of its people. When buildings are abandoned in a neighborhood like South Shore—as they were in rising numbers throughout the '70s—the empty hulks become targets for arson, hangouts for drug dealers, and homes for junkies. Crime grows, law-abiding residents flee, and more buildings are abandoned. Once things get that bad, no amount of loans or rehab projects will stop the process. Besides, most residents worked outside of South Shore, so bringing jobs in was less important to them than saving the existing housing. Milton Davis recalls: "They were saying, what are you going to do with upgraded commercial areas if you have nobody living in the neighborhood?"

At the time, financial institutions refused to offer mortgages on apartment buildings in Chicago's poor, black neighborhoods. They had tried and—as Grzywinski was warned by the chairman of one local savings and loan—they had failed. But Shorebank's managers decided to try anyway. They put in charge a young man who had started with the bank as a teller supervisor, Jim Bringley. Bringley is a nuts-and-bolts, blue-collar, get-it-done type. Slowly, carefully, he began lending to people who wanted to buy apartment buildings. He started with three- and six-flat buildings and gradually moved up. He only made loans in South Shore, and only to people who agreed to rehab their buildings. He then worked with them closely, even sponsoring monthly meetings where the growing stable of landlords could swap trade secrets.

For the most part, they were people who had never before been landlords. "Real estate here doesn't make sense for investors. It's gotta be for hands-on people," Bringley says. "It's generally people with blue-collar mentalities, who don't mind spending nights and weekends. It's not a coat-and-tie business—the dirtier you come in the better. . . . You go in and buy a bad building, you got drug dealers, you gotta get these people out."

As the new landlords filled up one building with paying tenants, they bought another, then another. Today South Shore has a core of about 50 housing entrepreneurs, some of whom own as many as ten buildings. They have learned the trade; some have taught themselves Spanish to communicate with their low-cost crews. By investing in the neighborhood's primary resource, its housing stock, they have kicked off a development process that has its own momentum; each renovated apartment building adds to the value of the last, and makes the next one easier.

Driving South Shore's tree-lined streets, one sees elegant courtyard buildings that would fit well into the tonier north side neighborhoods. The brick is freshly sandblasted; the grounds are immaculate; wrought-iron fences and gates lend the old buildings an air of grace. There are still pockets of decay, but the better blocks bring to mind a white, well-to-do community in the 1940s, not a black, inner-city neighborhood in the 1980s.

As important as Bringley's entrepreneurs have been to South Shore, there are some areas they would not touch. One area, known as Parkside, had been designated the site of an urban renewal project that was never carried through. With seizure by eminent domain seemingly a certainty, landlords had quit maintaining their buildings. By the mid-'70s, nearly half of the large apartment buildings in the area were tax delinquent, most on their way to abandonment.

After taking a close look, Bringley concluded that no rational person would buy and rehab a building there. He recommended a large, government-subsidized rehab project as the only way to stem the area's decline. City Lands Corporation, Shorebank's real estate development firm, brought in First National Bank of Chicago and another real estate development firm as partners, and together they structured a package that used heavy public subsidies and syndication to limited partners, who invested as a tax shelter. They bought 25 buildings, tore down five for parking lots, and ended up with 446 units of moderate- and low-income housing—the largest such rehab project in state history. With deep federal subsidies, they did not have to skimp. And Shorebank's managers screened applicants carefully with an eye to minimizing drug and crime problems. Parkways, as the project was dubbed, now looks more like an expensive condominium complex than a low-income housing project.

Elsewhere in South Shore, City Lands has rehabbed another 480 units. It will soon break ground on an eight-acre shopping center on 71st Street, which will provide the large stores and parking necessary to compete with the malls. The Neighborhood Institute (TNI) has rehabbed another 275 units, while offering remedial education and job training for people who are on welfare or unemployed. It runs a small business incubator, which gives inexpensive space and intensive management assistance to small businesses, and it plans two other incubators in the neighborhood. Finally, it provides training for entrepreneurs—including welfare mothers—who run or want to run their own businesses.

It is harder to gauge the effectiveness of TNI's training and business development efforts than that of Shorebank's housing work, because trained employees are far less visible than renovated buildings. But TNI has placed more than 2,700 of its trainees in jobs, counseled more than 1,000 entrepreneurs, and assisted roughly 70 start-up firms. Though it depends more heavily on public money than do the other Shorebank companies (because it is trying to help the neighborhood's poorest people), it is still forced to search for people who are capable of succeeding in the marketplace. Its training contracts with the city and state are performance based, meaning it doesn't get paid until it has successfully placed a trainee in a job. And its incubator will fail unless it stays relatively full of businesses that pay their rent. Overall, TNI earns about 90 percent of its $1.7 million operating budget—from training contracts, fees earned in developing and managing buildings, and rents.

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Financially, 1988 was Shorebank's best year ever. In a neighborhood where 70 percent of loan recipients (through 1980) had never before borrowed from a financial institution, the bank earned a $1.7 million profit—about average for a bank of its size. Virtually no real estate loans went bad, and even the commercial loans performed well.

As a community, South Shore not only has stabilized, it is improving markedly. The people who have bought and renovated apartment buildings serve as gatekeepers to the community, evicting drug users and criminals. Crime is way down, and the black middle class is staying. Under pressure from the community, the police have finally cleared out the El Rukns gang (descendants of the old Blackstone Rangers), whose presence kept one corner of the neighborhood from blossoming. The gang's headquarters building is being demolished, and TNI hopes to do a massive, Parkways-style development in the area.

South Shore is doing so well that Shorebank has targeted a second Chicago neighborhood, Austin. City Lands and TNI have 600 units of housing rehabilitation under way there, and Shorebank's entry has touched off a small speculative boom, encouraging other developers to begin work on another 1,400 units. Shorebank has convinced the Illinois Housing Authority, a prestigious business group called Chicago United, and the Federal National Mortgage Association to target Austin. The Housing Authority provides rehab subsidies, Chicago United will focus primarily on job training and education, and FNMA will provide $5 million for low-down-payment mortgages.

Shorebank's managers do not claim that their model would work in the very worst ghettos. But the worst ghettos, which get the most attention, are actually less representative of the typical poor neighborhood than are South Shore and Austin. (Actually, Shorebank's success may make the worst ghettos worse. The drug dealers and pimps who are cleared out by South Shore's landlords have to go somewhere, so South Shore's gain is some poorer neighborhood's loss. This is unfortunate, but if we are to rescue any of urban black America, it is probably inevitable. The culture of crime, drug abuse, and poverty can engulf community after community if we let it. The first step toward eliminating it is to confine it—to secure at least some inner-city neighborhoods where black children can grow up with role models who make a good living doing honest work.)

For most poor neighborhoods, Shorebank's success offers great hope and teaches important lessons. First, it demonstrates the necessity of changing the marketplace in a poor community, rather than simply spending more money. In many poor communities, the only inflow of capital is government transfer payments. In South Shore, money is coming in for *investment*, which means that it is being steered toward productive people, and therefore is likely to generate more money.

Second, Shorebank demonstrates the psychological power of a bank. Unlike government programs, banks inspire confidence. They have the credibility needed to convince other financial institutions to invest. And they send an unmistakable signal to a community's residents: people with money have confidence in the future of this neighborhood. Also, residents view a bank not as a program designed to do something for them, but as a source of credit they can use to do something for themselves. If the government can be convinced to subsidize programs like Shorebank, keeping them free from the government's taint will be a critical challenge.

Third, Shorebank demonstrates the importance of scale. Few poverty programs are of sufficient size to make more than a dent. South Shore Bank has invested more than $107 million since 1973, while TNI and City Lands have brought in another $65 million. Together, the three have financed more than 7,000 housing units. (These figures include Austin.)

Finally, Shorebank demonstrates the power of combining the investment methods of the private sector with the social goals of the public sector. The subsidy provided by Shorebank's equity investors has allowed it to invest where normal banks could not. But Shorebank is still at risk in the marketplace; to survive it must make investments that result in successful individuals, businesses, or buildings. If it doesn't—if Grzywinski and his colleagues don't get some return on their investments—they'll soon be unemployed (and, more important in their particular case, they'll have seen their dream die).

Shorebank is creating a slightly different version of the model in rural Arkansas, in partnership with the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation. Others are trying to replicate the Chicago model in New York, Washington, and Omaha. But none of the three has been able to raise the $5 million to $10 million they need to get started. This is where government must step in. If we want to see more Shorebanks, we need a source of capital. (We also need an institute to train the people who will run them, but that's another story.) Without government as an investor, the most dramatic inner-city success story of our time will remain the exception, not the rule.

This is not to say the model will be easy to copy, even with government help. Shorebank's success depends, to an unknown degree, on the extraordinary qualities of the people who run it. Moreover, an important part of that success lies in the program's very insulation from the deadening hand of government bureaucracy. If government is willing to provide equity investments to private development banks (and, perhaps, access to government deposits, favorable interest rates from the Fed, and so on) but not to demand more control than any other equity investor, a development bank program might work. If government treats development banks as *government programs*, required to meet all the public accountability standards and to jump through all the bureaucratic hoops, it will never work.

"Sometime in the last century or before," Grzywinski says, "we figured out ways to create universities and hospitals as major not-for-profit organizations that were capitalized either with public funds or private funds, to achieve a public purpose. We created them in a way that they would be substantial, permanent, and in the marketplace. They have to be managed like businesses. And one could ask, 'Why don't we create development institutions the same way?' " •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Fake Me Out to the Ball Game

A spectator sport has two functions. First, it provides the pleasures, rages, excitements of the game itself; second, and more persistently, it provides the stuff of fantasy. The baseball fan who says he has never daydreamed of pitching the winning strike or hitting the winning homer is a liar. This flat pronouncement is not limited to children. (Nor, by now, to males.)

For artists, that second function has been a seedbed. Surely the most beautiful baseball fantasy in films is Buster Keaton's solo game at Yankee Stadium in *The Cameraman*. But so deep is the idea and figuration of baseball in the American grain that some fantasies about it are more than athletic wish fulfillments: problems of American life have been moved to the stadium and put to various extensions and solutions. The start of the new season brings us one of each kind of fantasy: one that is strictly baseball, another in which baseball is the means to other ends.

Nothing happens in **Major League** (Paramount) that is utterly impossible, but everything in it is utterly improbable. The place is Cleveland, real enough, as is the stadium; the players are fictitious in more than one sense. So is the team owner, Margaret Whitton, a woman who hates the city. According to the Indians franchise, the team must remain in Cleveland as long as the yearly attendance, which is low, remains above a certain figure. Whitton has an offer from Miami to move the team there, an offer sweetened by a promise of a beautiful home for herself. So she does all she can to lower the quality of the Indians, not very high to begin with, hoping to lower the attendance even further and enable her to move the team and herself.

This drive for negative results (akin to Zero Mostel's in *The Producers*) includes hiring a very minor league manager, James Gammon; some presumably broken-down players, like Tom Berenger, a catcher in the Mexican League; some rookies, like Charlie Sheen, a pitcher fresh out of the California Penal League. The Indians sportscaster, Bob Uecker, does the play-by-play accounts at the start of the season like a cheery undertaker.

But, of course, the essence of this plot is reversal, and what makes it reverse is the team's discovery of Whitton's plot. The men decide to get their revenge by winning the pennant. That the whole team shapes up, plays like marvels, and takes the pennant is only part of the realistic fantasy. To be heavily literal, how could Whitton have concealed her plot? What sportswriter would not have smelled it out just by the men she hired? Et, as they say, cetera.

Doesn't matter. The engines of baseball enthusiasm start turning over early because the characters *within* the fantasy (written by David Ward) are spicily assorted, juicily written, and for the most part funnily-credibly played. The astonishment is that by the end of the picture—the playoff game against the Yankees—we are so whipped up that the last game is as gripping as if it were true. When Sheen comes out of the bullpen in the top of the ninth to face the strongest Yankee slugger in the clutch, we root—along with the now-packed stands.

Sheen himself, however, is still no powerhouse actor. After he has been offscreen for a few minutes and returns, it takes a second to remember who he is and what he is playing. But Berenger (who was with Sheen in *Platoon*) is our present best purveyor of Strong Silence. There always have to be a few such males in the current galaxy, and Berenger is Numero Uno at present. Gammon is all crusty-kind sagacity as the manager, and Uecker is just as amusing here as in his beer commercials. David Ward also directed, cleverly—seducing us, despite our eyes, to believe our eyes.

Field of Dreams (Universal) is the other kind of fantasy, in which baseball is important but is really a setting for different concerns. Phil Alden Robinson, the director, wrote the screenplay from a novel by W. P. Kinsella. The first few minutes with voice-over by Kevin Costner, who plays the lead, create some goodwill toward the film, but very soon it's betrayed, as the screenplay lurches wildly. There's never any question of believing the story; for a while

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Chocolat. *Autobiography. Claire Denis, a young French filmmaker, uses a surrogate to revisit Cameroon where she grew up and to discover the changes. A quiet, clear talent. (Reviewed 4/17/89)* **Hanussen**. *The makers of* Mephisto *and* Colonel Redl *investigate a clairvoyant whose rise coincided with Hitler's. Unrealized in theme but lush in atmosphere. (4/10/89)* **Lawrence of Arabia**. *Restored and reissued, it's now being recognized as the magnificent work that it is. (2/20/89)* **Little Vera**. *Engaging Soviet film about disengaged youth. The sex scene gets the publicity, but the real news is the frankness about the malaise of Soviet young people. Natalya Negoda is fetching as Vera. (5/1/89)* **—SK**

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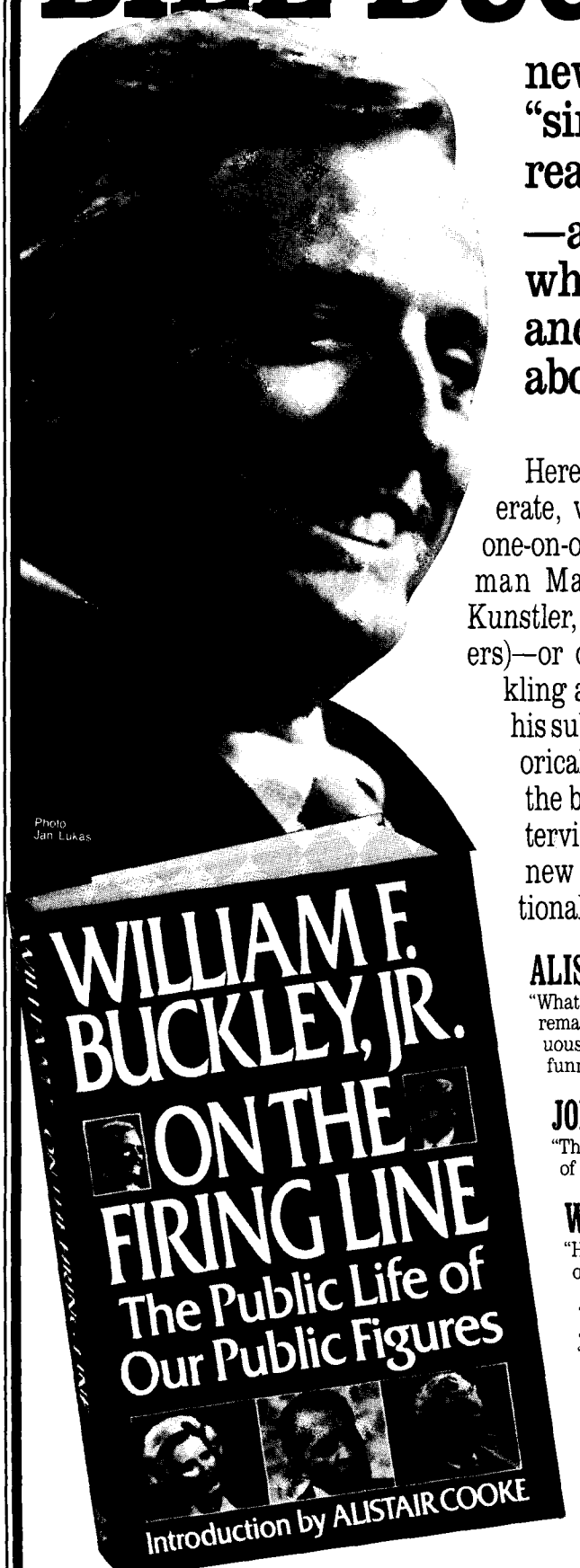

newest book is "simply wonderful reading" (Walter Cronkite) —a must for anyone who loves great ideas, and great conversations about them!

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there's a chance of accepting it as a means to sentiment, but it all collapses quite early.

Costner (the catcher in *Bull Durham*) is an Iowa farmer, with wife and child, who one day in the middle of his cornfield hears a voice saying, "If you build it, he will come." Because of his past and his strained relations with his now-dead father, a sometime ballplayer and fan, Costner reads this message to mean that if he builds a baseball diamond in the middle of his cornfield, Shoeless Joe Jackson will appear.

Shoeless Joe was one of the Eight Men Out treated in John Sayles's film last year, the members of the 1919 Chicago White Sox whose careers were blighted by a betting scandal. Costner's father had worshiped Shoeless Joe and considered him innocent. Costner—with his wife's hearty approval!—levels most of his corn and builds a diamond and bleachers. Shoeless Joe, dead many years, suddenly appears suited up and ready to play; next day he reappears with other members of the White Sox. More happens along these lines.

This is the kind of script in which, inevitably, occurs some variation on the line "I know this sounds nuts, but . . ." Here the line doesn't help: the story is too clumsily spiritual and too erratic in its movement. (Roped into the narrative is James Earl Jones, as a once-popular writer of the '60s, now soured and eremitic in Boston. Jones, still much too fat, tries hard to make himself belong in the story.) The tenuous conclusion is that all this metaphysical hugger-mugger was divinely ordered to reconcile Costner and his father. All those dead players were summoned from that Great Locker Room in the Sky in a painfully false move.

The Dream Team (Universal) is tenuously connected to the two films above because it hinges on an aborted trip to Yankee Stadium. A young doctor in a New Jersey mental hospital drives four of his patients to the game; en route he leaves the van for a moment in New York and gets cracked on the head. The four patients are set adrift in Manhattan, and they not only take care of themselves adequately, they rescue the injured doctor who has been unwittingly involved in a scam that endangers his life.

Like *King of Hearts* and *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*, this is one more film in which mental patients are as sane as the rest of us—saner, even—if we could only look past what their doctors say about them. I loathe such stories, even when they are well done. (The *Dream Team* cast is good; I'll never forget Jack Nicholson in *Cuckoo's Nest*.) Whether as allegory—authority (the hospital) versus free spirits (the patients)—or as sheer reversal comedy, a script like this one by Jim Connolly and David Loucka seems to me pernicious nonsense.

On my way to see *The Dream Team* in Manhattan, a tall, ragged, bearded man walking ahead of me suddenly whirled like a dervish and shouted incomprehensibly at the top of his voice for about 20 seconds. Then he walked on for a bit. I passed him, and I heard him behind me doing it again. Incidents of this sort are not rare in New York. Living in a city where thousands of incompetent people have been disgorged from hospitals into the streets is not the best preparation for a fun-filled comedy about mental patients.

Robert Brustein on Theater

Shakespeare with an American Accent

Implicit in much of the criticism of Joe Papp's Shakespeare Marathon is a suspicion that American actors and directors are ill-prepared to do classical plays. I believe with Papp that this assumption is false and that only a Tory culture besotted by British theater could fail to appreciate the genuine performing talent in our midst. Admittedly, Public Theater Shakespeare over the last two years has not been without failure, but neither has the Shakespeare of the well-endowed English companies, which enjoy a sizable share of feeble productions and superficial interpretations.

Papp's capacity to entice American actors away from films—and American directors from comedies and musicals—ought to be honored for its effort to bring major artists back to the great plays. And if he has displayed no special inclination to form a permanent company with the people he attracts, Papp may simply be bowing to the exigencies of American careerism. I suspect a few will continue to return—those who haven't been too mauled and battered by the press—and over time a kind of improvised company will develop.

Papp gave James Lapine, for example, his first opportunity to direct Shakespeare some years back in a production in the park of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Before this, Lapine had staged only a few off-Broadway musicals, his own plays, and *Sunday in the Park with George*. Lapine's *Midsummer*, though beautifully designed, was essentially the developmental work of a green talent. On the other hand, his production of **A Winter's Tale**, though far from flawless, represents a considerable advance, vindicating Papp's policy of evolving a classical theater with native resources.

A Winter's Tale is a fearfully difficult play to stage. A late romance, written at a period when Shakespeare had apparently lost interest in consistent characterization and coherent plotting, it is packed with abrupt reversals and outlandish incidents ("Exit [Antigonus] pursued by a bear"). Yet, in Leontes, it features one of the most intriguing characters in all of Shakespeare, and the final scene is a haunting evocation of resurrection, reconciliation, and forgiveness. In his late period Shakespeare—in language relatively bare of rich imagery or exquisite verse—is experimenting with the unexplored possibilities of the stage, just as Beethoven investigates the hidden reaches of music in his last quartets. Sixteen years go by in the intermission between Acts III and IV—this is not a playwright interested in the unity of time. Nor does he observe much unity of character. In the sudden, unmotivated jealousy of Leontes over the presumed infidelity of the chaste Hermione, Shakespeare is testing both the audience's capacity for empathy and its tolerance for the incredible.

Like Othello, Leontes is a man driven mad by suspicion, only his is self-generated. Without the insinuations of an Iago or the evidence of handkerchiefs, though also galled by conversations overheard, Leontes appears to be as great a potential tyrant as any Shakespearean villain. He orders the murder of his childhood friend Polixenes and his newborn daughter, Perdita. And his Strindbergian paranoia about paternity is responsible for the putative death of his wife, not to mention the actual death of his young son, Mamillius. Yet Shakespeare somehow manages to arouse indignation over Leontes's monstrous behavior without any loss of sympathy, thus fulfilling Beaumont and Fletcher's definition of tragicomedy as a form that brings you close to catastrophe but stops just short.

But then he drops Leontes's story for most of the second part of the play, mov-

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ing the action from Sicilia to Bohemia and creating a pastoral interlude wholly out of sync with the tragicomic mood of the first three acts. The roguish tricks of Autolycus, the shenanigans of the shepherdesses, Mopsa and Dorcas, the ritualistic sheepshearing scene, the love affair of Florizel and Perdita, are hardly consistent with the dark colors Shakespeare paints in his earlier tale of jealousy and revenge—except for the parallel tyranny of Polixenes upon discovering his son's infatuation with a commoner. This disunity of tone makes the second part seem flaccid, as if the tragedy of *Othello* had been mistakenly collated with a few scenes from *As You Like It*. Yet the final episodes of the play, capped by the lovely Pygmalion ending, restore the unity of action, if not of character and tone, just when you thought the playwright's control was slipping away.

Lapine attempts to unify the play through a number of devices: in an interpolated prologue an intrusive harlequin (played by Robert Besserer) cavorts through the action, dispensing flowers and scarves; and Mamillius is told the tale in storybook form by Hermione ("a sad tale's best for winter"). This permits the dead child, the one discordant element in the resolution, to be resurrected at the end along with his mother and the devoured Antigonus.

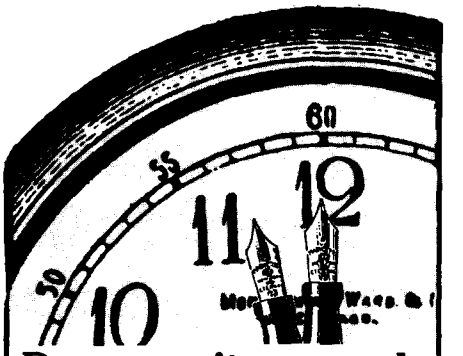
But Lapine, for all his ingenuity, is unable to bring any active life to the pastoral interludes. John Arnone's semi-Elizabethan setting transforms nicely from the somber Sicilian court, with its hidden upper alcoves and huge clock icon, to rustic Bohemia, decorated with a verdant Rousseau-like painting and a smiling sun that seems to be made of baked bread. Franne Lee's costumes place the characters in an Empire period where the men look Napoleonic and the women slightly pregnant. And Beverly Emmon's lighting searches the remote corners of the elevated scrim area, ideal for plotting and eavesdropping on the events below.

But it is in the first part that the tension holds best, thanks to a riveting performance by Mandy Patinkin as Leontes. Patinkin emphasizes the Italianism of his character. Scowling from above as he watches Hermione plead with Polixenes to remain at court, he is in a rage from the first moment we see him, surly and sullen, sour as curdled milk. When Mamillius comes in with a toy, he almost strikes him, then tenderly washes a smudge off his cheek with spittle. Wagging his leonine hair, jabbing his index fingers in the air for emphasis, he tells a spectator his wife has been "sluiced in his absence." Patinkin's face transforms into animal features—a wolf, a lynx, a marmoset. His gruff nasal tenor stammers over the "m" in "mercy," spits out the sibilants in "issue." And when his madness is gradually tempered by remorse over the multiple deaths he has caused, he who was pre-eminent in tyranny determines to be unmatched in grief. Touching the cheek of Hermione's living statue, he says in tones that have the vibrant ring of ecstasy, "Oh, she's warm."

Diane Venora, last seen on this stage as a female Hamlet (she has the mysterious, saturnine beauty of the dark lady of the sonnets), plays Hermione at first with wit and high spirits, then with open-eyed disbelief over her husband's pathological behavior. When Leontes confronts Hermione in her bedchamber and, charging her with adultery, pulls Mamillius from her arms, Venora's tone is conciliatory, but there's defiance and outrage beneath her lighthearted raillery. She appears before his judgment pale and enfeebled in a grey worsted skirt and wrinkled satin shawl as he hovers imperiously above her, hands behind his back like a merciless Javert. And returning to life wordless in the final scene (her last lines have been cut), she becomes an image of mute poignance and family unison, hugging Perdita to her bosom as snow falls from above.

Not all the roles are successfully executed. Christopher Reeve's Polixenes has a stately, aristocratic bearing, but also a muted naturalistic delivery that robs him of forthrightness and resolve. Alfre Woodard's Paulina lacks the requisite strength of this infuriated virago, and her "boundless tongue" is often twisted, when it is not singsong. Rocco Sisto's Autolycus, playing the gags instead of the situation, captures the cleverness of this "snapper-up of unconsidered trifles," but misses the coarse knavery that, say, Robert Newton might have emphasized. And while Jennifer Dundas's Perdita has a truly lovely adolescent innocence, she could use some voice training to deepen her teenage piping.

Many of the smaller roles, on the other hand, are sensitively played by MacIntyre Dixon, Michael Cumpsty, James Olson, Bertina Johnson, and others, and there is a common style to the performance that sustains its authority even when some of the acting flags. I also liked the witty, near-contemporary music of Michael Starobin and William Finn, Lapine's collaborators from musical comedy. Most of the time the production is congenial to the play, and the company—the better actors trained at Juil-



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liard—substantiates Papp's faith that Americans are capable of creating lively, intelligent classical work, if they could just spend some time on the job.

A word about the 13th annual Festival of new American plays, produced by the Actors Theater of Louisville and funded by a whopping $400,000 grant each year from the Humana Foundation. Normally, this six-week spring series is dominated by regional Southern plays, set near washer-driers or coffee cups and revolving around anguished personal relationships. The one play I saw in the Festival, Harry Crews's **Blood Issue**, was no exception, though it did enjoy a truly powerful performance from Anne Pitoniak as a crusty Georgia matriarch trying to keep her two sons from discovering their true paternity. One of these boys is a racist redneck, the other a hard-drinking alienated writer ("I'm a stranger in my own goddamned country")—probably a stand-in for the author who, like most fledgling playwrights, is raiding his own family closets.

Crews, an experienced novelist, has the potential to become another kitchen laureate of the American theater, though his play is rather crude. The surprise of the work lies not so much in its plot revelations as in the author's capacity for critical self-examination. It is not the redneck but the writer who is condemned at the end—"You ain't got nothing to hang onto, 'cept an empty glass of whiskey"—while the rest of the family is united by their respect for the strength of blood ties.

Louisville also included a play commissioned, somewhat cynically, of William Buckley. But the sensation of the festival was Arthur Kopit's **Bone-the-Fish**, the author's reaction—or rather revulsion—to Mamet's lively Hollywood comedy, *Speed-the-Plow*. I only saw this work in manuscript and can't evaluate the production, but one reading is enough to establish *Bone-the-Fish* as one of the most relentlessly scatological satires of our time. It is also very funny. This account of the extreme lengths to which Hollywood toadies will carry their opportunism doesn't feature Madonna as an actress. Instead, she's one of the play's characters (under a different name). Dazzling in its capacity for insult, and animated by unsuppressed ferocity, *Bone-the-Fish* is destined to create a scandal wherever it is performed. Just what we need in the dog days of the current season.

Are characters like people?

The Human Factor

By Irving Howe

The idea of character, once taken to be central to the reading of novels, has come into critical disrepute. Literary theorists are eager to dismember the idea of character, one of them, Rawdon Wilson, writing, for example, that "the distinction between characters and people is an absolute one." Such theorists often assume a stern posture, so that if you are caught discussing a fictional character in the way you might talk about a human being, you will probably be convicted of being "a naive reader." This scorn is extended, these days, to the innocent pleasures of responding in the usual moral and psychological terms to characters like Don Quixote and Pip, Julien Sorel and Odette, Hans Castorp, and Leopold Bloom.

We are warned against supposing that characters in novels are real persons, though who, except the deranged, ever supposed they were, I cannot say. We are warned against supposing characters are even like actual persons. The theorist who wrote that the difference between characters and people is "absolute" (but what can that mean?) also argues that characters are "at most patterns of recurrence" (but recurrence of what, if not traits similar to those we discern in human beings?). Another critic, something of a joker, writes that "Emma Woodhouse is not a woman nor need be described as if it were." A large gain in critical perception is evidently registered by calling Emma an "it." And the writer-philosopher William Gass, shrugging off the lures of qualification, writes that "the so-called life one finds in novels, the worst and best of them, is nothing like actual life at all." Nothing at all: not Anna Karenina's passion, not Lucien de Rubempré's ambition, not Captain Ahab's obsession, not Gatsby's delusion? If these are indeed not at all "like actual life," where can we find the necessary descriptives when trying to evoke the clashing figures and interests of a novel?

We must repress the spontaneous impulse to describe the moral conduct and psychological motives of characters in the only language we have available, and instead we are to see them as elements or functions in the workings of narrative. Whether that makes them more accessible, to say nothing of more interesting, seems hardly to matter. And we are to repress our knowledge, or to judge it inconsequent, that the great novelists strove with all their powers to make characters who would indeed *seem* like actual persons. Taking that into account might be to share the ignorance of genius.

Some arguments of the new theorists have an ideological charge. The sophisticated (if barely readable) French theorist Hélène Cixous writes that a novel with mimetic characters turns into "a machine of repression," of bourgeois repression, of course, since it presents a historical given as if it were everlasting and thereby thwarts the hope of transcendence. Cixous's prose sputters fitfully, but insofar as I can make her out, she would seem to be saying something fairly close to what Roland Barthes has said. He believed that the very use of the preterite tense (like the notion of character?)

> is part of a security system . . . one of those numerous formal pacts made between the writer and society for the justification of the former and the serenity of the latter. [This is part of] a certain mythology of the universal typifying the bourgeois society of which the Novel is a characteristic product. . . . It is thanks to an expedient of the same kind that the triumphant bourgeoisie of the last century was able to look upon its values as universal . . .

There is something bizarre in the notion that fictional characterization is an agency of repression, or that the use of the preterite (or any other) tense is a justification of the status quo; this is to confuse narrative conventions with social categories. Where, in any case, have our strongest visions of possibility, as also our most telling social criticisms, come from, if not the great novelists? It is they who have given imaginative substance to what the young Marx called "the human essence," and far better and more fully than any social theorists, Marx and Nietzsche included.

Tolstoy once wrote that "the incompatibility of a man's position with his moral activity is the surest indication of

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Irving Howe is working on a book about the novel titled *Selected Short Subjects*.

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his searching for truth," a remark that could stand as an epigraph for the work of Dickens and Stendahl, George Eliot and Dostoyevsky, Flaubert and Hardy, Lawrence and Proust. The ideological formulas of the social theorists have all too often been ripped apart by historical change, but the critical visions of the great novelists abide. If we can, in this somewhat dimmed moment, see beyond what Barthes calls "a certain mythology of the universal typifying the bourgeois society," that is largely because of the writings of novelists and poets who lived in that society.

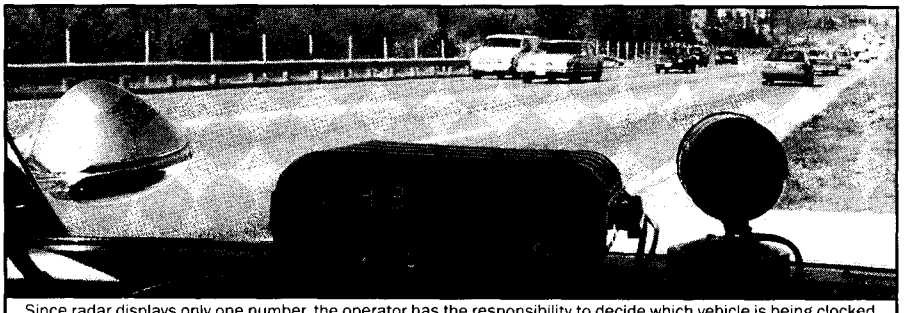
In what sense do characters "exist"? True, neither Anna Karenina nor Lily Bart is a real person as you and I are, though anyone who said these characters sometimes "seem more real than you and I" would quickly win nods of understanding. Why, then, should intelligent people choose to push against open doors? Perhaps because they have spent too many years teaching undergraduates that a distaste for Jane Austen's Emma as a possible mate (or roommate) isn't exactly a fatal criticism of the novel in which she appears.

A fictional character emerges out of an arrangement of language that sets off in the reader's mind an imagined situation or "world": all-encompassing as in Tolstoy, miniature as in Austen, strange as in Kafka. Characters, as the neo-Aristotelian critic R. S. Crane puts it, are "concrete semblances of real men and women," with the term "concrete semblance" evoking the required tension between what is mimetic about the character and what is constructed. How a novel is shaped, the arrangement and weighting of its parts, the authority through which its matter is established—such formal elements help to determine the nature of its characters. They do not come to us directly as people in a living room might. They are mediated, they must "fit" into the narrative—though in some novels they also spill across the limits of form, as if to suggest a surplus of vitality.

The novel is also a mimesis, an imitation drawing upon the writer's observations, intuitions, and imaginings—a mixture of his own experience and his relations to other writers dead and alive. To see the novel in this way has always troubled critics who would like to liberate it from gross contingencies. One may genuinely sympathize with this desire, but it is in the nature of the very language such critics like to exalt, alas, that it should make for referential impurity. Words point, words evoke images and ideas, words betray. Words cannot be self-sufficient, like the stroke of a brush or sounds of an instrument. Words impel us (I quote W. J. Harvey) to see a character as

> the sort of man who in such-and-such a situation would do so and so. . . . [The novelist] can frame the situation to justify the *would do such-and-such* in our reaction. . . . He may also leave room enough for us to speculate and to frame other situations than those actually existing in the novel. . . . Such speculative activity may, in fact, compose a large part of the character's reality for us.

The moral and psychological traits that constitute a character are drawn from the writer's experience of the world. Where else? From past writers, some critics would say. That is true, but *somewhere* a writer must have engaged in direct observation on his own. Even the blind Homer must have "seen" something in the life about him. Literature cannot live off itself forever. Others will say, the writer draws upon his imagination. That is also true, yet one must ask: Upon what does the imagination do its work, where does it gather the materials it transfigures, if not from a perception



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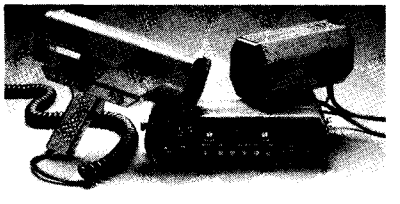

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of life? Imagination is not something apart and hermetic, not a way of leaving reality behind, it is a way of engaging reality. The imaginative work is what the writer does with, and to, reality; otherwise, why should the novel make such powerful claims upon us?

The novel thrives upon our interest in ourselves, our ways, our world. Lose or abandon that interest and it becomes a game we may indeed play and gain pleasure from, but hardly "the bright book of life" that D. H. Lawrence called it. "If the fascination of human types is an end in itself (and the novel generically reflects such an assumption)," writes Robert Alter, "the deepened experiential knowing of the imagined individual is a process that justifies itself." True, in a writer like Kafka that "imagined individual" becomes radically diminished, and in a writer like Beckett a dwindling of the "fascination of human types" becomes a central premise. But there is a thread of continuity with the past even in their break from the traditional novel, for the definition of the break would be impossible without the presence of the tradition.

Mirror and lamp: such is the doubled nature of the novel. Simply to serve as elements of narrative, characters have also to resemble, in one way or another, actual persons—which also means that they must differ from them. (If one could even imagine a character utterly devoid of human traits, he or she, perhaps in this case "it," could not possibly be of any use to fictional narrative.) Every moderately sophisticated reader senses all this, just as every moderately sophisticated playgoer, even while shaken by Lear's fate, knows Lear to be a fiction, a semblance made for performance. Nor are the concepts of mimesis and fictional construct to be seen as fixed and irreconcilable opposites; they are categories of perception with which to specify aspects of a work that, finally, we hope to apprehend as a whole.

The great fictional characters, from Robinson Crusoe to Flem Snopes, from Tess to Molly Bloom, cannot quite be "fitted" into, or regarded solely as functions of, narrative. Why should we want to? What, but the delusions of system and total grasp, do we gain thereby? Such characters are too interesting, too splendidly mysterious for mere functional placement. (Who'd even look at Emma Woodhouse if she were just an "it"?) Severe critics say that characters "exist only on the page." But why do critics want to be so severe? They are wrong too; all that exists on the page are black marks. As symbols for language, these marks stimulate impressions in our minds that lead us to suppose—though we "know better"—that characters exist in their own right, apart from the page. They refuse to be banished. They will not be driven back between covers.

Consider now the contrary view advanced by William Gass. In a lucid essay ("The Concept of Character in Fiction" in *Fiction and the Figures of Life*) he offers as an example of a character, neither quite major nor minor, Mr. Cashmore in Henry James's *The Awkward Age*. Mr. Cashmore, writes Gass, is "not a person." That having been cleared up, Gass continues: "Nothing whatever that is appropriate to persons can be correctly said of him." What, then, is Mr. Cashmore? "A verbal center." Also: "1) a noise, 2) a proper name, 3) a complex system of ideas, 4) a controlling conception, 5) an instrument of verbal organization, 6) a pretended mode of referring, and 7) a source of verbal energy."

Well! Nos. 1, 2 and 7 (noise, name, and energy) can be attributed to actual persons, so these don't differentiate them sufficiently from fictional characters. Nos. 3 and 4 (complex system of ideas, controlling conception) help to specify the place of characters in novels, though it may be asked how one can speak, with regard to a fictional character, of either "a complex system of ideas" or "a controlling conception" except through some reference to imagined persons. For Mr. Cashmore is not per se greed or sexual squalor, he embodies these ideas and traits through images of individuality—which means that something "appropriate to persons" can indeed be said of

From The Pages of Corriere Della Sera (Oct. 29, 1975): A Lutheran Letter

. . . And what of the young, who were once my saviours?
Last week in Rome, two sixteen year olds with revolvers
shot their companion like Mafioso thugs:
For money? No, his motorcycle's spark plugs.

And last night a fifteen year old fired a gun
at the legs of "a boy who practices nudism,"
then yelled: "Next time, I'll blast apart your mouth."
—The papers of course leave such stories out.

Just as they ignore the Palace shenanigans,
deals with CIA, Mafiosi, bankers, oil firms:
These Christian Democrats slip favors to flatterers
just like the Bourbons, keeping proper manners.

And the public? When you are fooled a dozen times over . . .
And the Church? Merely a foreign financial power.
There's no copper in Italy, no ITT:
just missile bases in the hills of Tuscany.

(This isn't Chile. It's Christian Democrat Italy.)
Yes, in ten years, the petty-bourgoisie
compulsory schools, a criminal T.V.,
have made their mockery of all I believed.

Let Calvino be Catholic, silent, deceived.
Let him scape-goat the well-bred Fascists of Parioli
whose murderous orgy in a villa one evening
is echoed each night by working class punks all over Italy.

Look at the total, it's not aleatory:
In rage, in despair, I condemn our politic economy!
Hedonism, false tolerance, these are our deities.
Over and over I'll repeat my litany.

—Pier Paolo Pasolini

DAVID MURA

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him, with whatever complexities seem "appropriate."

We come back then to No. 6, "a pretended mode of referring." This seems perilously close to mimesis. Gass might reply that his key word is "pretended"—the novelist "pretends" to be representing real life while actually constructing an autonomous fiction. But if he wants that construct to be persuasive and consequential, he had better employ some materials incorporating his sense of actuality; otherwise he may not be able to endow his "pretending" with much force and point.

To prove how little Mr. Cashmore is conceived as mimesis, Gass has a lot of fun in showing that we actually know very little about him. Does Mr. Cashmore, he asks, even have a nose? Very likely; if he didn't, James would have been the first to notice. The real fun, however, resides in the name of Mr. Cashmore. Gass could hardly have chosen another character whose name points so insistently to "whatever is appropriate to persons." Who but a human being, real or simulated, wants more cash? Is there another name in all literature, except perhaps Bunyan's Badman, that brings us more urgently to the precincts of common life? Cashmore and Badman, Investment Counselors. With his jolly vulgarity and slightly sinister air, Mr. Cashmore does his job admirably as a function of the narrative, but he is also supremely *there* as an imagined figure. That he be there is, indeed, a precondition for fulfilling his function in the narrative.

Why should there be, in the academy, this humorless and pleasure-denying attack upon the mimetic view of character? At a time when the margin for authentic individuality keeps shrinking, we might suppose that literary people would see the value of such terms as self, individual, personality, character. And if these prove to be somewhat frail defenses for a humane or humanist view of things, that ought to make them still more precious. To speak these days of a humanist view is perhaps to risk embarrassment, since the phrase, like all the other valuable ones in our vocabulary, has been devalued through misuse and appropriation. But that hardly warrants dismissal, least of all the scorn one hears for it as a sign of nostalgic liberalism.

I can see one further argument to be made for Gass's views, and it is a serious argument, glancingly anticipated in Meyer Schapiro's famous essay, "On the Humanity of Abstract Painting." Schapiro writes that "humanity in art is . . . not confined to the image of man. Man

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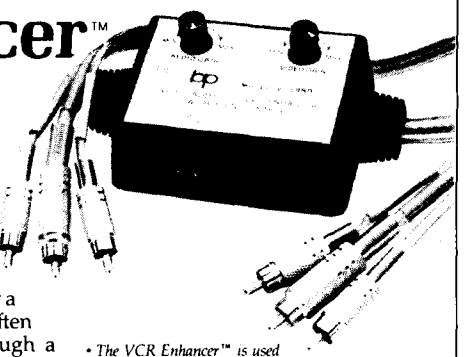

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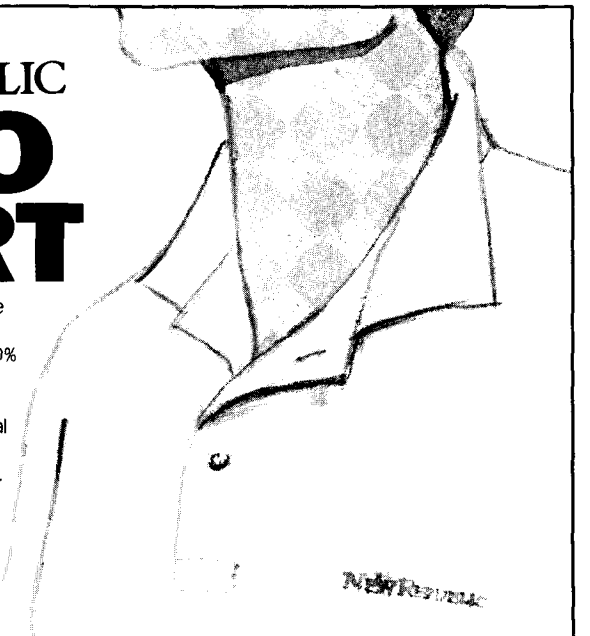

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shows himself in his relation to the surroundings, in his artifacts, and in the expressive character of all the signs and marks he produces." Correspondingly, it might be said that the formal arrangements, the verbal patterns and sounds in a work of literature, yield pleasure apart from any supposed relation between characters and persons. That is certainly true, but with two important points of complication. First, in referring to "the expressive character" of signs and marks, Schapiro does not dismiss "the image of man" as a source of value and pleasure, he merely insists that this image is not the only evidence of "humanity in art." Second, there are crucial differences among the arts. When it comes to sensuous enticements, the written word can seldom compete with the sounds of a piano or the colors of a picture. Words have the inescapable property—call it, if you prefer, a fatality—of evoking imaginatively human figures and situations that seem to "exist" apart from the marks on the page. And thereby we gain an enduring companion of consciousness.

Gilt by Association

BY FRANK RICH

An Empire of Their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood by Neal Gabler

(Crown, 502 pp., $24.95)

Goldwyn: A Biography by A. Scott Berg

(Knopf, 579 pp., $24.95)

"Sleeping with a pretty Gentile girl made them feel, if only for a few minutes, 'I'm half Gentile.' No wonder they made idols out of *shiksa* goddesses." So spoke Edgar Magnin, rabbi to Hollywood's stars and starmakers, as quoted by A. Scott Berg in *Goldywn*. The Hollywood faithful made an idol out of Rabbi Magnin, too. As Neal Gabler writes in his study of the first generation of studio-builders, "Magnin became the Roxy of religion." He had his Wilshire Boulevard Temple designed (by a movie art director) after the Parthenon in Rome, he took voice lessons so that his sermons could become "performances," he "freely interpreted and changed prayers because he considered them 'third-rate poetry. . . .' " In other words, Magnin did to Judaism what the studios periodically did to the Old Testament: he added Technicolor and crowds, rewrote at will, banished as many traces of ethnicity and authenticity as he possibly could. (The Israeli flag was forbidden to fly at Rabbi Magnin's synagogue.)

The Jews who invented Hollywood loved feeling half gentile, and not just for a few minutes. Shiksa goddesses were far from the only platinum idols they worshiped. The moguls—Louis B. Mayer (Metro), Adolph Zukor (Paramount), Carl Laemmle (Universal), Jack and Harry Warner (Warner Bros.), Harry Cohn (Columbia)—sprang from the same turn-of-the-century Eastern European immigrant milieu, but their cultural legacy is antithetical to that world. Indeed, it is actively, aggressively, opposed to it.

"What was so beautiful about that damned *shtetl*?" the pandering Rabbi Magnin was fond of asking, teaching his Beverly Hills flock that in the towns of Eastern Europe people "lived like pigs." To eradicate all traces of the old country, of their own origins, the studio chiefs created an idyllic, sanitized image of WASP America on film, where the boys, whether Andy Hardy or William Saroyan's Homer Macauley (in *The Human Comedy*), all look like Mickey Rooney. It never occurred to them that their sentimentality about rural America was just as blatant as, and further removed from reality than, the sentimentality about the shtetl that they deplored.

The embarrassed Jewish moguls created what Gabler calls "the world of homespun truths"—a landscape of

> capacious white clapboard houses with broad verandas, gleaming white streets, and shops with friendly picture windows, a quaint town square where one could pitch horseshoes on a lazy summer's evening, a library the size of a small cathedral, an archetypal high school with matronly teachers whose lives were dedicated to inculcating virtue.

Many years later this Anytown, U.S.A. can still be found in movies and on television. Michael J. Fox lives there, and so, late at night on cable, does the black-and-white ghost of Beaver Cleaver. Have Jews moved in yet? Or do they still just write the scripts?

An Empire of Their Own is a pioneering work because Gabler has examined his subjects, all of whom hailed from the same few hundred square miles surrounding Warsaw, as Jews. That, to be sure, is something they never did themselves. (Approached by a Jewish relief fund, Cohn responded: "Relief *for* the Jews! How about relief *from* the Jews?") These men "were a remarkably homogeneous group with remarkably similar childhood experiences," Gabler writes. They despised their fathers, who were invariably failures in life and business. They adored their doting mothers. Their desire to assimilate was distinguished by a "ferocious, even pathological, embrace of America [that] drove them to deny whatever they had been before settling here."

Though uncultured and often illiterate (Cohn couldn't correctly spell the name of his own studio on a thousand dollar bet), they transformed movies from one- or two-reel novelties to lavish, full-length showcases for "Famous Players in Famous Plays" (Zukor's phrase) by "Eminent Authors" (Goldwyn's obsession). "I've got America's best writer for $300 a week," bragged Jack Warner, after signing Faulkner. Irving Thalberg—Mayer's production head, the model for Scott Fitzgerald's romanticized Monroe Stahr and, until his sudden death at age 37, the second-generation heir apparent—thought nothing of holding a who's who of Broadway captive for hours in his office anteroom: S. J. Perelman, Sidney Howard, Robert Sherwood, George S. Kaufman, Marc Connelly, S. N. Behrman, Donald Ogden Stewart. Thalberg even tried to recruit Arnold Schoenberg to write the score for *The Good Earth*. "None of the Hollywood Jews, least of all Mayer, wanted to be considered a businessman," Gabler writes. To be a businessman was to be transported back to the world of their fathers, to their own lowly pasts in the fashion, glove, or fur trades.

But businessmen is all they were—though brilliant businessmen, empire-builders. If there was any artistic spirit in these men, it could be found only in that first moment when they fell in love with

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the movies, usually by happening upon a nickelodeon in the early, pre-World War I days of flickers. After that, culture became window dressing, a necessary gloss of social prestige slapped on the goods, a brand name denoting the numinous thing that Goldwyn reverently called "class."

Why so many of the movies turned out to be wonderful is a topic that Gabler, a film critic, doesn't address seriously; but that's a subject for another book, which would bring the directors, writers, and actors more into play. What's impressive about *An Empire of Their Own*, its original research aside, is its author's own ability to avoid the haughty "Our Crowd" tone typified by, say, Walter Lippmann, who blamed anti-Semitism on "the rich and vulgar and pretentious Jews of our big American cities ... bejeweled and furred and painted and overbarbered." Gabler doesn't hold the moguls responsible for anti-Semitism. He accuses them, rather, of obliterating their identity.

The price for that massive self-erasure was perhaps steeper than Gabler says, extending well beyond the psychological or cultural. An exception like *The Jazz Singer* notwithstanding, explicitly Jewish characters and Jewish stories were invisible in Hollywood A movies in the years before Hitler and during Hitler. In other words, the Jewish eminences of the entertainment industry banished Jews from their work precisely when the visibility of Jews in a mass, international art form might have made a small difference.

Of course, as Gabler explains, the men who repressed their past hurt themselves as well. It was largely because of their immolation of themselves as Jews that, in their private existence, there was no there there. They aestheticized their own environment even more than the small towns they built on the back lot. Until he was stopped by his daughter Edith, Louis B. Mayer planned to decorate his Bel Air home for his second marriage (to a gentile, naturally) all in white. He preferred the feeling of a hospital because, as Gabler says, "the slightest hint of color would be too showy and déclassé." Each Mayer room had the most expensive rendering of his Andy Hardy vision of America he could find: a canvas by Grandma Moses. "Her paintings are life," Mayer said.

But these men didn't know from life. They didn't enjoy their families and they didn't enjoy their wealth. They seemed to unwind only when they compulsively gambled. Rabbi Magnin and the Los Angeles German Jews, largely bankers and lawyers, formed the Hillcrest Country Club in 1920, but the Jews who were charmingly called "movie kikes" by Magnin's mother were not welcome until their money was needed during the Depression; and even then membership didn't satisfy their craving for genteel/tile status. (It was of Hillcrest that Groucho Marx said, perhaps not so frivolously after all, that "I wouldn't want to be a member of any club that would have me.") Looking for a more exclusive club, the moguls joined the Republican Party, a most un-Jewish thing to do at the time; but they were unlucky, because history in varying degrees embarrassed them, as the Holocaust, Israel, and the McCarthy era forced them, despite their best efforts, to be identified as Jews.

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

There was such a sameness to these men, to their response to any situation, that Gabler's study of them eventually flattens out into repetition. Only the book's most vulgar scoundrels (that's saying something!) fail to conform to the predictable behavioral patterns established early on. Certainly Gabler's serviceable prose lights up whenever Harry Cohn crashes on stage. A man who made a point of working on Yom Kippur (a holiday observed in either of these books only by Sammy Davis Jr., during the making of Goldwyn's *Porgy and Bess*), Cohn admired Mussolini so much that he displayed his picture during the war, and had his office modeled on Il Duce's. The minions of Hollywood's great dictator would have to walk an intimidating 30 feet from his office door to his desk, a journey known as "the last mile" by visitors who would "shit in their pants by the time they'd get there."

Sam Goldwyn merits fewer than a dozen mentions in *An Empire of Their Own*, and no wonder. Often present at the creation of major studios, Goldwyn was promptly tossed out or bought out by his peers. Everyone seemed to despise him. Ina Claire paid $10,000 to get out of a Goldwyn contract. Charlie Chaplin would skip board meetings at United Artists to avoid him. Walt Disney, Frank Capra, Leo McCarey, and Gregory La Cava shied away from UA productions rather than deal with him. When George Gershwin was too sick with head pains to come into the studio to work in June 1937, Goldwyn immediately suspended the composer from the payroll. (Gershwin died of a brain tumor a month later.) According to Berg, about the only person who "liked" Goldwyn was that charitable soul Lillian Hellman. (He happened to have purchased *The Children's Hour* and *The Little Foxes*, which he always called "The Three Little Foxes.") And even the notoriously tight Hellman ended up buying her way out of his reach.

The press, however, adored Goldwyn. With the aid of flacks like Benjamin Sonnenberg, he assiduously courted every-

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one from Arthur Hays Sulzberger to Louella Parsons. It was Alva Johnston, in a *Saturday Evening Post* profile (later published as *The Great Goldwyn* by Random House), who used the phrase "the Goldwyn touch" to describe pictures that eschewed "sensationalism" for honest workmanship and that "never insulted" the "intelligence of the audience." Berg repeats this press-agentry with a straight face. But only a few pages later there is a glimmer of the truth, when he quotes Danny Mandell, the editor of Goldwyn films for 25 years: "I never knew what 'the Goldwyn touch' was. I think it was something a Goldwyn publicist made up." William Wyler, who directed Goldwyn's best movies, adds, "I don't recall [Goldwyn] contributing anything other than buying good material and talent. It was all an attempt to make a name for himself as an artist. But as far as being creative, he was zero."

This judgment concurs with Ethan Mordden's. In his *The Hollywood Studios: House Style in the Golden Age of the Movies*, he reaches a firmer and more correct conclusion about Goldwyn's contribution to American film in a few sentences than Berg does in more than 500 pages:

> Goldwyn's output was largely programmer material handsomely displayed, the B movie as A feature. Goldwyn had neither taste nor vision; Goldwyn had money. . . . At least Zukor and Mayer and Cohn were direct. At least Thalberg was influential. At least Laemmle had been, in youth, a rebel. At least Zanuck really liked movies. And each of them knew what he wanted from a movie, and if he wasn't getting it he'd ask for it. . . . Goldwyn was forever looking for artists who could translate his stumbling suggestions into specifics—forever looking because sooner or later he offended everybody.

So why this massive biography? Berg never satisfactorily explains why, unless one is excited by his claim that Goldwyn wanted "to redefine the reputation—if not the role—of the independent producer." In nearly half a century of moviemaking, Goldwyn made no great movies, and only three very good ones (*Stella Dallas*, *Wuthering Heights*, *The Best Years of Our Lives*). And, given his desecration of two landmark musicals at the end of his life, *Guys and Dolls* and *Porgy and Bess*, one might conclude that his career was, in sum, a wash. (If Joseph Mankiewicz, the director, hadn't stopped him, *Guys and Dolls* would have been worse; in place of the equally miscast Frank Sinatra and Marlon Brando, Goldwyn had hoped to land Jerry Lewis and Dean Martin.)

Berg tries to inflate Goldwyn's achievements in film history, but he ends up offering an inadvertently hilarious cavalcade of Goldwyn goofs. Goldwyn either failed to sign, or failed to see the charms of, Katharine Hepburn, Betty Grable, Lauren Bacall, and Barbara Stanwyck. Instead he created short-lived stars out of Anna Sten, Vilma Banky, Virginia Mayo, and Teresa Wright. Other stars—Ronald Colman, Gary Cooper, Joel McCrea—had their greatest triumphs on loanouts from Goldwyn, or after ridding themselves of him. Goldwyn rejected Balanchine's ballet to Gershwin's "An American in Paris" for *Goldwyn Follies* (1937), only to see a full-length treatment of the same score win the Academy Award for Best Picture 15 years later. Impressed by *Potemkin*, he invited Eisenstein "to do something of the same kind, but a little cheaper, for Ronald Colman." When Goldwyn tried, with *Nana*, to emulate Mayer and Thalberg by making a movie of a classic, "Zola's heirs applied to the French courts for permission to sue Goldwyn on the grounds that [the novel] had been 'disfigured to a point where it is unrecognizable.' "

Even in death Goldwyn continues to court the press. This book is the posthumous culmination of those efforts. Not quite an "authorized" biography, *Goldwyn* was born when the producer's son, Samuel Goldwyn Jr., offered Berg unrestricted access to his father's papers. It's easy to see what attracted Goldwyn Jr. to Berg; the author of a life of Maxwell Perkins could confer intellectual prestige on his father. For his part, Berg obviously hoped to find Hollywood's epic story within Goldwyn's biography. But as Gabler's book makes all too clear, Berg picked the wrong man for his larger purpose. The subject he really needed was Louis B. Mayer, the quintessential mogul and the true architect of MGM, the Tiffany studio (from which Goldwyn departed in 1924), or David O. Selznick, the quintessential independent producer (who brought forth *Gone With The Wind* the same year Goldwyn produced *Wuthering Heights*).

In his acknowledgments, Berg pays tribute to Carlos Baker; and *Goldwyn* recalls Baker's *Ernest Hemingway* in its obsessive accretion of unexamined details. Nowhere else can one find such complete plot summaries of the movies Goldwyn made with such favored stars as Eddie Cantor, David Niven, Dana Andrews, and Farley Granger. Berg leaves no question unanswered about how gloves were manufactured in Gloversville, New York, where Goldwyn broke into salesmanship in the new world.

To its credit, the book doesn't hide its subject's cruelty, to the children Goldwyn belittled and ignored or to the artists he abused and cheated. But Berg is objective to a fault; the troubling matters that inform Gabler's book are treated with cautious superficiality. If *Goldwyn* has a fiercely held thesis, it has to do with bringing homosexuality, rather than Jewishness, out of the closet. Considerable energy is expended on the tiresome, academic question of whether Goldwyn's second wife, Frances Howard, would have married her best friend, George Cukor, if Cukor had not been gay. The point of the speculation, besides titillation, seems to be to diminish a great director's status in Hollywood history, to transform George Cukor into a precursor of Jerome Zipkin.

This is not to say that Berg neglects the facts of Schmuel Gelbfisz's origins. The young man's trek westward from Warsaw, hundreds of miles of it by foot, is recounted in impressive detail, as are the sad facts of his virtual abandonment of his Hasidic relatives. We also learn the sorry story of how Goldwyn deserted the wife and daughter of his first, Jewish, marriage, and of his subsequent and seemingly loveless bond to Frances, a Catholic who lived in terror of being considered "a Jewess." She, late in life, augmented the new image provided by a face-lift by converting half of her (separate) bedroom into a "nun's cell."

But what do these facts signify? "Nobody knew what the Holocaust cost Goldwyn emotionally," writes Berg kindly, and quickly changes the subject. When Goldwyn dyes Danny Kaye's hair blond to "brighten" his screen image, or obsessively turns to croquet (at which he cheats) for sport, Berg acknowledges the ethnic and psychic implications, but he soft-pedals them. The biographer sees the humor, but not the meaning, of an anecdote in which Goldwyn complains that the set of *Dead End*, a film about the New York slums, is "too filthy." He is content to pin Goldwyn's failure to film two books dealing with anti-Semitism, Gwethalyn Graham's novel *Earth and High Heaven* and *The Diary of Anne Frank*, on, respectively, unsatisfactory screenplays and bungled negotiations. And perfectly in the spirit of his subject, Berg cites Rabbi Magnin, whom he labels "a grandson of the clothier I. Magnin" (he

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was an estranged grandson), as a sage. There is not a shred here of Gabler's admirable skepticism.

The epigraph to this life of Gelbfisz is from "Ozymandias," and its chapters are called such things as "Exodus," "Elba," and "Canaan." *Goldwyn*, in short, is nothing less than an attempt to claim for Samuel Goldwyn's life and career the same importance, the same tony veneer of "culture," to which Goldwyn himself aspired, to invest him with the same hyperbolic spiritual grandeur with which Rabbi Magnin flattered his congregants. When Goldwyn manufactured his own early, ghostwritten autobiography, he tried to dress up his Horatio Alger legend by adding chapters on Valentino and Jackie Coogan, and by using an autographed picture of Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Fairbanks as a frontispiece; it was an attempt at what Berg nicely calls "gilt by association" with stars who had "little or no connection" to his life or career. But it's quite a step up from Fairbanks to Shelley.

Finally Berg is as much a captive of Hollywood's ethos as the men who invented it. That is why he ostentatiously includes a dedication to a movie star, Katharine Hepburn, who is then flattered shamelessly in the acknowledgments. That is why he takes a virtually tragic tone in his description of Frances Goldwyn's inability to continue buying "expensive silver and crystal" after her husband loses $2 million on an Anna Sten flop; and, later, why he brings no irony to his description of Mrs. Goldwyn's avid reading about "French history, especially Marie Antoinette." When Goldwyn becomes the recipient on Oscar night of a Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award (this, for a man who sent a formal get-well letter signed by a secretary to his sister on her deathbed), Berg regards the citation as a genuine milestone, rather than as a typical, laughable exercise in Hollywood hypocrisy.

Goldwyn is the thesis of *An Empire of Their Own* put into action. It achieves for a Jewish mogul what the moguls could never achieve for themselves: Goldwyn becomes as dull as the caricatured gentiles of his idolatrous fantasies. To smooth his subject's rough edges, Berg at first downplays the producer's legendary misuse of the language in favor of his own (the nervous Loretta Young is described as "literally tongue-tied" when filming her first love scenes with Ronald Colman). He eventually does remark upon the most famous of all Goldwynisms, "Include me out." But those words no longer apply to the overrated man who has finally made it into the promised land of the restricted club.

FRANK RICH is the drama critic for the *New York Times*.

Buying and Nothingness

BY ANDREW SULLIVAN

The Want Makers: The World Advertising Industry—How They Make You Buy by Eric Clark

(Viking, 416 pp., $19.95)

All Consuming Images: The Politics of Style in Contemporary Culture by Stuart Ewen

(Basic Books, 306 pp. $19.95)

L'empire de L'éphémère: La mode et son destin dans les sociétés modernes by Gilles Lipovetsky

(Gallimard, 343 pp., Fr.105)

Between 1967 and 1982, the number of print and broadcast advertisements in the United States increased by 103 percent. On current trends, this rate of growth will accelerate in the '90s. As media markets boom—cable, video, free newspapers, direct mail—ads are growing in number and intensity. The 15-second television ad, an innovation of the '80s, is now common. There isn't even the consolation that it's all just a blur: research shows that shorter ads with speeded-up voice-overs are better retained by the human brain than longer, slower ones. In newspapers, 65 percent of the pages are now ads, up from 40 percent half a century ago. And the saturation level is never reached: ads are now found on soda cans and coffee mugs, in cabs and check-out lines, on trash cans and executive desks, on mobile billboards and immobile restroom doors. Even plain white notepaper now has advertising printed along its edges. The average consumer is exposed to some 50 to 100 sources of advertising between getting out of bed in the morning and finishing the newspapers at work an hour or so later, assuming that the television isn't on.

Speed and ubiquity are only part of the transformation. The content of advertising has been changing, too. The banal early techniques—the conveying of information about a product—have ceded to a kinder, subtler ministration. "Mood" advertising, the sort that vaguely links class, myth, fantasy, or beauty with a product, rather than relaying a product's features or communicating any other consumer information, has become the most prevalent form. In his witty, thorough tour of the contemporary advertising industry, Eric Clark cites a survey of ten years ago that posited 14 items of information about a product (price, quality of performance, and so on) that might be mentioned in a mildly informative advertisement. Over half the television ads in a single night's viewing did not contain a single item. Only one percent contained three or more. Fourteen percent of magazine ads contained no such information at all.

But the most unnerving revelation of Clark's book to those unversed in ad culture concerns the care with which the industry calibrates these images to the minds and souls of specific individuals. In the last 20 years there has been a slow but inexorable abandonment of class-based marketing, rendering much traditional criticism of advertising—that it exploits the poor—virtually irrelevant. False consciousness, if that is what it is, has long since left a crude socioeconomic base. To be sure, the class angle is still there, but it is increasingly submerged in appeals to individualist vanity, self-esteem, "values." The new marketing hones in on a consumer's "lifestyle" (marital status, education, region, sex) and "attitudes" (religion, ambition, optimism, etc). These days they're better signals than someone's income.

Clark cites the state-of-the-art tech-

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nique known as VALS, short for "values and lifestyles." The categories manage to be both insipid and sinister. There are "survivors" (poor, old), and "sustainers" (struggling, young), "belongers" (traditional conformists), and "emulators" (macho yuppies), "achievers" (familial workaholics), and "I-Am-Mes" (young '80s individualists), "experientials" (menopausal new agers), and the "societally conscious" ('60s nostalgics). The most prestigious are the "integrated": mature, intelligent, sensitive, successful—and two percent of the population. The categories sell: they're used by *Time*, AT&T, Coca-Cola, Procter & Gamble, Tupperware, and the British Conservative Party, institutions not renowned for romantic delusion. And their insistent implications are clear. They assume a certain self-consciousness on the part of the consumer, an increasing awareness of personal as well as socioeconomic identity. They succeed by flattering the individual's fantasy about himself, not by expressly relating his identity to a class. They work because they play more on our fantasies about the future than on any reality about our past. In short, they are beginning to evoke a new character on the sociological stage: the bourgeois without a bourgeoisie.

All this sociology does not require, of course, that we take advertising seriously. Perhaps the sanest response to ad culture—to its ubiquity, its power, its flattery—has been the bemusement most appropriate for a 15-second message for Liquid Drano. And much of advertising journalism (the genre is growing relentlessly) has a suitably cheerful feel to it, as if the subject of trends is best seen as some sort of relief from real news. And yet the premise of ad criticism also pivots on the understanding that ad culture reveals something unanswerable about our collective psyche, and is therefore in some way, though we're not quite sure how, primordially important.

Most treatment of the subject treads, then, this ambiguous line, deeply confused, implying profundity, conveying a joke, describing a darkness whose manifestations are essentially light. Normally, thankfully, the light wins out. Clark cites a cheering survey in Britain that found that a quarter of viewers of the network news on a given night had seen *none* of the commercials. (Twenty-six percent simply didn't pay attention, 21 percent were fixing a drink, 20 percent left the room, 11 percent were doing something else, eight percent switched channels, six percent went to the bathroom, and five percent actually talked to someone.) More ads may lead to more cynicism, not less. And the proliferation of new media disperses and dilutes the sources of advertising's homogenizing power. Even the growth of mood advertising may mean no more than a response to the expanding market. To break through the noise of other ads, a commercial has to be visual, emotive, even silent.

And yet, as Eric Clark, Stuart Ewen, and Gilles Lipovetsky all make clear, and as the growing academic and journalistic credibility of advertising studies suggests, the argument for seeing advertising as the essential cultural influence of our time is gaining strength. It rests on two grounds. The first, the more credible, is simply that advertising is the most faithful reflection of the newly powerful market economy and the society it is generating. It is the most faithful since its very essence is to sell. For Americans, this connection has always been there, though the Reagan years underscored it. For Europeans, the 1980s saw a clear rebuttal of social democracy as a model for politics and the nervous embrace of market economics. To them, the significance of advertising is that it is a cultural premonition of a social and economic future that is fast arriving. It is telling that Clark is British and Lipovetsky is French: the cultural impact of advertising is still novel enough to shock them.

The second reason for taking advertising's claims to cultural pre-eminence seriously is less abstract. It is advertising's growing economic power over other media. Like most parasites, advertising is now devouring the organs that once sustained it. Its grip on television, journalism, and politics is profound. Clark's most interesting chapter shows systematically that the last decade witnessed the sharp decline of almost all forms of ad-free culture. Public television retreated all over Europe. The expansion of cable and VCRs dented the networks' monopoly and further extended market mechanisms in the media. Free newspapers displaced regular newspapers. Advertising replaced subscriptions as the main source of newspaper and magazine income; magazines came to exist not simply by advertising, but for advertising. Pseudo-editorial magazines with single source advertising, directed at closed markets, boomed. Advertorials deliberately blurring the distinction between ads and editorials became commonplace.

Clark shows how this transformed the market. Ad men who could not afford to waste money concentrated resources on the highest circulation newspaper in a town, and crowded out equally addependent competitors. Monopolies followed: a cozy setup for advertisers and newspaper-owners, but a disaster for editorial standards. The result is that 98 percent of American cities now have a morning and an evening paper rather than two morning papers.

Newspapers are just one area, however, in which ad power is having an effect. In television, networks now unveil their fall schedules to advertisers before they show them to their affiliates, let alone to their audience. In movies, products are featured seamlessly in the editorial story line. A lot of this is not new, of course; but the magnitude of advertising's power to sustain or to destroy other media *is* new. Parasitism is perhaps no longer the right metaphor. We can speak less and less of our culture and the advertising that feeds off it as two separate entities. They are increasingly entangled. In the forseeable future, they will be indistinguishable. It is only a slight exaggeration to say that advertising will soon no longer be supporting our culture, our culture will be supporting advertising; or rather, our culture will *be* advertising.

Is this too stark? The merit of Clark's study is its commonsensical belief that this development need not be fully completed, or entirely corrupting. Mozart sponsored by IBM is still Mozart. A moviegoer who sees Steve Martin grasping a bottle of Perrier still knows which of the two is the actor. As consumers become used to such techniques, their guard is raised. And yet Clark also documents a process whose effects are subtler and profounder than common sense is fully able to counter. There *does* come a point at which our facility with advertising dims our conception of the values

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that might lie beyond it. We are not merely mesmerized by the sheer volume of advertising, we find it harder to remember the justification and the meaning of a culture that exists beyond the market, or in spite of it. We have also, to be more mundane about it, been transformed by the shortening of our attention span. The impact on politics is too well documented to bear repeating. But the effect elsewhere may be just as deep. We are fast generating a society whose commonest form of communication is less a debate—let alone a conversation—than a three-second shot; whose ethic, finally, is an aesthetic.

Stuart Ewen's analysis of precisely this phenomenon is focused on the object of ad culture: us. He subtitles his book "*The Politics of Style*," since for him the ethic of constant change, the principle of "fashion," is the controlling principle of the ad age. For Ewen, advertising is merely the pusher. "Style" is the drug. We are the junkies. Ewen recounts tales of his style-obsessed students in New York, depicting an aestheticization of modern life that is depressingly convincing. He gives an account of advertising's role in this process that echoes what are by now commonplace reservations. This requires, of course, that Ewen dismiss the idea that ad fantasies have any intrinsic worth. They are, for Ewen, inherently unstable and debilitating, never satisfied by the act of purchase. A Ralph Lauren scarf does not transform the New York sales rep into an English aristocrat; it may delude him with that image, but eventually it serves to remind him of the difference between his life and the life of the man in the ad. And this leads, in turn, to greater or newer fantasies, in a spiral of alienated distraction. Ewen's unstated but clear villain is, of course, capitalism. His theme is that modern culture amounts to a variety of mass hypnosis.

Ewen's contribution lies, however, not in his somewhat tired Frankfurt School criticism of ad culture, but in his understanding of how that culture actually came to be formed. He traces the process to early Modernist designers, from Le Corbusier onward, who explicitly attempted to construct a unified "style" for modernity, and from whom advertising grafted its mission. And the aesthetic itself is telling. As our economy moved inexorably away from real goods and industrial production, its design became literally more insubstantial. Reality was replaced by image; tangible goods by design. Ewen sees no coincidence that Wall Street—the industry of invisibles—is housed in linear buildings made of glass, aimed at the sky, reflecting thin air. Nor is there any accident in the new ethic of slimness in the human body:

> The external, *social* ideal of thinness is a byproduct of modernity. It speaks for a life that claims to live beyond the consequences of nature. . . . Conforming to ideals that have informed development in architecture, design, advertising imagery, and fashion, the ideal body is one that no longer materially exists . . . regardless of the shape one's body takes, whatever flesh remains is *too much*; image must be freed from the liabilities of substance.

There is a cost to such stimulating coherence, not least in its strained attempts to squeeze all-too-deep meanings into the clutter of modern living. (Does one really have to wish to disappear into thin air to want to avoid cholesterol?) And one scours Ewen's book in vain for any trace of humor, irony, or amusement. At one point he earnestly points out that Chardon jeans need only lose one letter to become "hardon." And if Ewen has a morbid respect for the power of fantasy to distort people's minds, he belittles the complexity of the lives with which fantasy necessarily interacts. His picture of the modern consumer is one of hopelessly false consciousness. No distinctions are drawn between various levels of ad addiction. A junkie, to Ewen, is a junkie. The increasing sophistication of advertising, suggesting, as it does, an increasingly sophisticated audience, is lost on him.

The history of popular culture and style, as well as the history of market capitalism, is too varied, too interesting, for Ewen's to convince. For all his attempt to unify the direction of modern style, no single designer has been able to recast or dominate a fragmented market; no single mode of capitalism has been coterminous with the development of fashion, even in this century; no trend has failed to spur a countertrend, and these trends have competed with each other as much as sustained a mutually fulfilling cycle. Nor does Ewen's picture of individual enslavement square fully with what we know of the new research techniques: that (as VALS suggest) the new models imply at least a complicity on the part of modern consumers, whose entrapment, if entrapment it is, is clearly more linked with individual dreams than with class hypnosis and whose delusions have increased at the same time as their real economic power has expanded.

Ewen shows no sense, in short, that even within the captivity of consumerism, the consumer still has some room to maneuver: that she can choose this fantasy over another, this product over another; that she can outwit by mockery, humor—or even simply boredom—the

A POST-VICTORY sketch of Mikhail Gorbachev, landslide winner of the Soviet election: ". . . a young man, and at once a progressive and a despot, as often happens with Russians" (*Fathers and Sons*, Ivan Turgenev, 1862).

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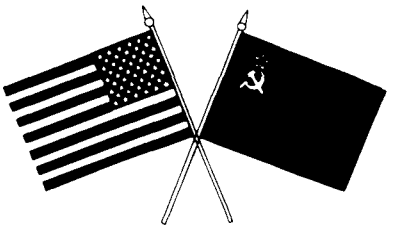

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schemes of an industry as much at war with itself as it is intent on capturing her. The modern world of advertising, in other words, cannot be simply reduced to a monochrome plane of capitalist oppression, without missing something essential. Its tyrannies are the tyrannies of seduction, not rape.

And if it is Ewen's aim to explain the human soul involved in this seduction, he doesn't do so subtly or persuasively. Mostly this is because his reductionist approach to advertising—its umbilical relationship with capitalism—refuses to see where that relationship can be broken: at the point at which human imagination makes the advertiser's fantasy its own. Thus Ewen misses the sometimes exquisite nature of the modern psyche's predicament. Take his treatment of the students in his New York class, some from traditional backgrounds, now floating listlessly in a metropolitan world of hairstyles, music, dance clubs and videos, finding in "style" a postmodern identity. Shortly after introducing them, he enters familiar territory:

> We cannot, in evaluating the patterns of individual style, disregard the fact that over the past century, an ongoing lament has been that of aloneness, isolation, invisibility, and insignificance; a desperate thirst for recognition, often expressed as a desire for fame.

The problem is not that Ewen is wrong, but that he is only half-right. Of course there is a sense of aloneness in the strangers Ewen laments in the dance clubs of New York. But that aloneness is surely accompanied, and modified, by a sense of exhilaration. The ennui of the dance-clubbing classes is oddly frenzied, if it is ennui at all. Those flickering faces gazing into a video screen are filled with freedom as well as submission; and to miss that irony is to miss the contemporary condition of "style" entirely.

The real paradox of style is that shallowness can also be a kind of liberation. By self-consciously acting on the surface, by allowing a part of our lives to be moderated by the evanescent, we may gain a genuine release from mundanity, a release that is not to be despised simply because it is not fully coherent. This freedom, which only comes with a certain level of superficiality, is the freedom of distraction: a fleeting freedom, maybe, but a freedom nonetheless. I do not mean to endorse the abolition or the abnegation of deeper experience. Still, in the vagaries of style and the seductive strategies of consumerism, there is an attempt to color, as well as to mask, the occasional alienation of modern life.

We may not, as Ewen would insist, fully escape alienation, but we may, with the help of style, modify it; and that is not a contemptible endeavor. We have long understood, in any case, that alienation is also a form of belonging, that there are communities of the alienated. If such communities are now created by style, rather than by a church or a father or a government, that does not reduce their affective power. And the mild, often playful communities of style are a good deal more benign, and sustain a good deal more individual autonomy, than some others we may think of: say, the communities of cults, ideology, or political messianism.

Gilles Lipovetsky's book, which created a stir in France when it was published, sees these intimations of liberation in the hegemony of style, grasps some of the ironies involved, and turns them into an ideology. His is an undifferentiated celebration of modern narcissistic freedom: a defense of bourgeois individualism without the constraints of bourgeois morality. For Lipovetsky, fashion is a simple sign of autonomy, beginning in the aristocratic rivalries of the 14th century and developing into the concrete freedom of the modern 1980s consumer who can pick his or her identity off the rack. In this way, "style" provides new social identities for modern individuals otherwise stripped of meaningful roles. It sustains a form of transcendence for moderns whose familiarity with genuine transcendence is increasingly faint—and it can do so more accurately than other forms of distraction because it is more finely attuned to the intricacies of demand than any other. VALS, unlike even Hollywood, can give each of us exactly what we want.

In one of his more ingenious arguments, Lipovetsky also claims that style plays a profound role in the legitimation of Western democracies. It does this by aestheticizing, and thereby defanging, the abstraction of ideological, anti-liberal politics. Lipovetsky cites the way in which the "revolution" of '68 differed from previous ones: it was led by consumers, not by the genuinely oppressed, motivated by the aesthetic of revolution rather than by its real justifications, and it was therefore deservedly impotent. He might have added, as a political counter-example, that Reaganism's production values undermined its ideology, that preference for image over argument ultimately sapped its ability to revolutionize the polity. The anti-ideological acid of style can cut both ways.

Lipovetsky also disposes of the economic arguments against style. He argues that there is nothing intrinsically unstable about an economy geared to the insubstantial, nothing dangerous about relying on advertising rather than steel, say, as a source of economic strength, if advertising is a good that a country can produce better. In America in particular, fantasy has long been an important economic product, and the emergence of a burgeoning market for it both here and around the world is, for Lipovetsky, a cause for economic hope, not pessimism. Britain's recovery has largely been premised on exactly that exploitation of economic advantage: British skills in language, presentation, irony have been central to British domination, even in the United States, of the ad industry.

Much of Lipovetsky's case, curiously like Ewen's, has the power and the exhilaration of all reductionist models, although his rhetoric is a good deal more accomplished. He is also far more engaged in the contemporary predicament. He sees the sophistication of modern advertising; he is alive to the social possibilities of our cultural transformation, while Ewen can only lament them. And because he embraces, rather than merely dismisses, the new age, he understands it better. The intimations of autonomy, the exhilaration of bourgeois fantasy, the growth of individualism, are all properly central to Lipovetsky's concerns.

And yet Lipovetsky's enthusiasm is clearly overblown. To see no threat in the enormous power of advertising is glibly to dismiss the fact that autonomy is not merely awarded to individuals; it has to be won. And there is a Whig historicism to Lipovetsky's account of "freedom through style" that is as deterministic and as unconvincing as Ewen's warmed-up version of Horkheimer and Adorno. There is also an ugly complacency to his politics, as if defanging ideology (as style may well accomplish) did not risk defanging real politics as well, sapping it of its essential conflict, blinding us to those rare moments when radicalism may be necessary.

The determinism is both suffocating and deeply out of place with its subject. It is given away in the title: we are in the "empire" of the ephemeral. For this postmodern liberal, style is not simply the central reality of our times; it rules our times. Lipovetsky's era of autonomy is remarkably heteronomous in its scope: it controls, it orders, it dispenses. Sometimes his book reads like an apologia for power. Unwilling to distinguish between mass trash and mass amusement, he is forced to defend all forms of mass culture as mass enlightenment:

> Under the complete hegemony of style, the human mind is less sure but more open to criticism, less stable but more tolerant,

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less certain of itself but more open to difference, to proof, to argument. . . . The unreason of style contributes to the development of individual reason. Style has its reasons of which reason knows nothing.

This is incantation. It should be possible to construct a theory of style and advertising that can admit its importance and yet distinguish between higher and lower forms of pap. Nor should a defense of advertising imply a defense of the market in all its forms. To see the possibilities in style for human autonomy, to see the benignity of much of advertising's penetration of our lives, does not necessitate a complete suspension of critical judgment. We should be able to perceive where style diverts and where it corrupts, when it sustains and stimulates other media and when it perverts them.

One of the fertile paradoxes of advertising is that this modern, shallow phenomenon need not generate a shallowly modern response. If style, after all, turns on some intimation of human autonomy, then something quite contrary to either Ewen's or Lipovetsky's determinism follows. Style can be rejected as well as chosen. It can be something we treat with the frivolity and the seriousness of genuine play, an activity whose point is not simply that it amuses, but also that it ends. This is a point about distraction that both Ewen and Lipovetsky dismiss, but that the ad age makes increasingly apparent. Modern distraction is premised on a profound consensus: that there is a place to be distracted from.

ANDREW SULLIVAN, a former TNR associate editor, is a doctoral candidate in government at Harvard University.

From Clash to Cliché

BY WENDY LESSER

Hence
by Brad Leithauser

(Knopf, 320 pp., $18.95)

At one point in his description of the man-against-machine chess game that forms the story-within-a-story of this book, *Hence*'s narrator glances over articles about the event clipped from various periodicals: " 'From Clash to Cliché'—*The New Republic*; 'Zoo Story'—*Vanity Fair*; 'Dark Dogmas'—*The New Criterion*; '. . . And Everyone's a Loser'—*The Nation*." Wittily accurate in tone, those headlines somehow give the impression that Brad Leithauser has already read and digested the reviews of his as-yet-unpublished book. Since transcending time boundaries is partly what *Hence* is about, one longs to abet Leithauser in his forecast—especially since it's also a novel about playing games, about making the proper countermoves, about correctly assessing the strengths and weaknesses of one's clever opponent.

Cleverness is essential to *Hence*, since the story alone is hardly enough to carry the reader. At the center of the novel is a media-hyped chess game between Timothy Briggs, a 20-year-old chess prodigy who seems rather lost in the real world, and ANNDY, an MIT computer programmed by stereotypical nerds. (ANNDY appears to be more powerful than any of the chess-playing machines now extant, and also more irritating: he comes equipped with a fund of heavy-handed jokes at the expense of his opponent, which he continually flashes to the audience via an electronic screen.) In his battle against the machine, Timothy receives various forms of support, criticism, and distraction from a group that includes his kindly but rather out-of-it chess coach, Imre; his malapropian mother, Doris; a dark-haired bombshell, named Victoria, from the sponsoring computer company; his ex-girlfriend and eventual fiancée, Linda; and his older brother Garner, a prematurely stodgy Harvard law professor. In the background are various ghosts whose lives affect Timothy's without their ever appearing personally in the novel: the Japanese musical prodigy Ma-Chan, who comes to us through the pages of *Time* magazine; the Rev. Rabbitt, a maniacal, bloodletting, fundamentalist minister who reaches out to his flock over the airwaves; and Tommy Briggs, Timothy's identical twin, who died at the age of six back in the Briggs's hometown of Victoria, Indiana. In the nearly arrived future in which all of this takes place (the book is set in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1993), the climate is altering dangerously, conspicuous consumption has reached a fevered pitch, and life goes on pretty much as it does now.

Timothy's understandable disgust at the "John Henry" theme the media try to inject into the chess match should clue us into the fact that this book is not really about the symbolic clash of man against machine. Nor does *Hence* use chess as a metaphor for other human pursuits, as literary works from *Through the Looking Glass* to *The Defense* have done. The chess game itself is largely a way to maintain some kind of narrative suspense while Leithauser plays a series of games with the idea of literary form. Disguised as a lesson on the evils of technological progress, *Hence* is actually a tribute to one of the earliest and most revolutionary products of technology: the printed book.

This is a novel for people who are fascinated by books, particularly by books as physical objects. In keeping with its theme of identical twins, it has two of everything: two title pages, two "Notes of the Type," two sets of epigraphs, and even two authors. The first author is, of course, Brad Leithauser. The second title page announces that *Hence: A Meditation in Voices* is by Garner Briggs, Timothy's brother, who first published this book in 1997. It is now being reissued by the "Rearguard Press" (obviously an outfit interested in antiquarian objects, like books) sometime in the mid-21st century, complete with a new introduction by one Robin Orrin, whose excessively convoluted and self-displaying prose style is only exceeded by that of Garner Briggs himself. This, then—the book reissued in 2050 or so—is the object we hold in our hands in 1989.

A great deal of the charm of the book comes from the unlikelihood of its "author." Garner, as a character, is the sort of man who seems incapable of perceiving anything outside his own small sphere of interest; yet as an author he is self-effacing enough to disappear completely into *his* characters, the other creatures of this book. His own voice is as stiffly magisterial as Henry James's (a parallel emphasized by Garner's Jamesian use of quotation marks to enclose putative slang), but he gives voice to people as unliterary as the flaky Doris and the nerdy MIT hackers.

Garner is a throwback to 19th-century authors, as Leithauser suggests in his numerous references to the Victorian age of poetry and prose. Browning, for instance, appears in the name of the Briggs boys' elementary school; Hopkins's "Spring and Fall" echoes in Doris's contemplation of her blighted life, "as if this is the lot we are each of us born for." The

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obsession with identical twins could have come straight out of the fiction of Twain, Poe, Dickens, and Wilkie Collins. And in the "looking backward" authorial stance there may well be a reference to Edward Bellamy's utopian novel of that name.

Like Bellamy's title, but in the opposite direction, the title *Hence* has both spatial and temporal significance; it can also refer to causal connection. It is a rare word in contemporary American speech, with an archaic and literary flavor. But it's a word we can still understand, and as such it binds the past and the present together (and, with luck, the future), just as Leithauser's literary references do.

In part, Leithauser's allusions are riddles for the wary reader. Timothy Briggs at one point notices that "this sort of cleverness, in which one tier of meaning is conveyed without bothering anyone, so that those who don't recognize it don't even see that they don't see, sets up a sort of pleasant tickle in the recesses of his brain." But that kind of tickling, with its overtones of selfishly pleasurable exclusion, could be irritating if it were all the allusions provided. I think they do more. As Garner says of the crazy but honestly religious TV minister Rev. Rabbitt, "There is undeniably something powerful and compelling, *morally* compelling, about that voice"—the voices, I mean, of *Hence*.

The moral function of allusion is to suggest that we are not all isolated in our own time, but can have conversations and memories going back far beyond our own births—and, in an act of the imagination, can do the same in writing with those who come after our deaths. Allusion suggests our potential kinship with the dead and the as-yet-unborn, our connection with their writing and reading. It's related to what Timothy says to Garner about siblings inhabiting the same mother: "Twins, it's like all brothers and sisters are twins in that way. . . . Don't you see? With nothing, nothing but time separating them." Nothing but time separates us from the archaic writers we may love, and nothing but time separates us from the frightening, certainly different, but nonetheless conceivable future that may love us.

The triumph of *Hence* is that, precisely by emphasizing its nature as a book about narration, it becomes simultaneously a book about character. Leithauser turns the usual self-reflexive technique on its head. Instead of using authorial games to undercut the reality of novelistic characters, he employs them to mock and to diminish his own relative strength as author, so that the characters seem more "real" by comparison. For instance, he opens *his* page of epigraphs (Garner Briggs gets his own page, with quotes from Donne and Icelandic folklore) with a quotation from his own previous novel, *Equal Distance*. What nerve, we might think. But he then has Robin Orrin say about Garner Briggs: "I worried that the reader would find him from the very first, from those impossible epigraphs he dug up God knows where, a cold and arrogant creature . . ."

Self-mockery is only one element in the kind of authorial self-transcendence that Leithauser advocates. For me, the most moving moment of the novel comes when Garner steps back into the wings, announcing: "I seek to be the best and deepest guide the reader has had, but if I am to attain my ambition it seems necessary for me now to bid you a partial but permanent farewell." And, a page later, when the narration has relaxed from Garner's overly precious prose to a more transparent, "objective" idiom, we get the following perception on behalf of Timothy:

> "Your arrival was indirectly heralded in one of our very local newspapers," Garner announces. It is typical of Garner to have something prepared-sounding to say, in place of any more conventional greeting.

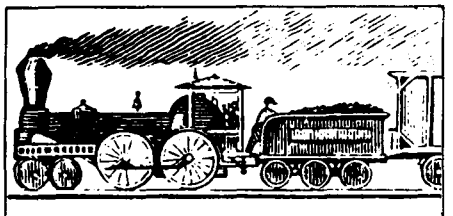
In allowing Garner-the-hidden-author to mock himself, Leithauser-the-hidden-author has given him as much wit and freedom as he permits himself. Only by becoming a character in his own book does Garner completely become an author.

Hence is by no means a perfect novel; it falls off badly at the end. In a series of supposedly epiphanous moments—Timothy's visit to the playground where his twin had the fatal accident, and his subsequent reunion with his old girlfriend, Linda; Doris's melancholy retrospective on her life in Victoria and the death of her best friend; the televised suicide of the Rev. Rabbitt; and so forth—Leithauser seems about to offer us a real ending, even as he takes it away with the other hand. He never does tell us who wins the chess match. And this whole final segment, as he tours the pasts and possible futures of his characters, suddenly acquires a portentous tone; it is narrated in a voice so sententious that it makes Polonius sound like the Player King. This terminal authorial voice is not that of the book's central narration, nor of Garner's overture, nor even of Robin Orrin's introduction. It is like no other voice in the novel, except—and perhaps this is the point—that of ANNDY, the computer. Or, at least, it's the voice that ANNDY might have if he ever stopped cracking jokes long enough to write a novel.

The end of the novel, in its ponderous search for "significance," gives up on precisely the small pleasures that cumulatively make the novel worth reading. *Hence*'s ability to please stems in large part from Leithauser's poetic eye for the tangible details of existence. He gets things right, and amusingly so, from the sartorial eccentricities of science professors to the quality of light after midnight on city streets. But in the end he turns away from these pleasures, and also from the Victorian novelistic pleasures of closure and plot resolution, leaving us instead merely with something that sounds like Beckett imitating a machine, or a machine imitating Beckett.

I imagine that Leithauser has his reasons—either to jar us out of our comfortable, suspense-motivated, old-fashioned reading habits and remind us that we are, in fact, in the inconclusive 20th century; or, conversely, to adopt an omniscient, present-tense, Victorian-sage tone. Unfortunately, such rationales don't really justify the letdown at the close of *Hence*. Until the novel's end, we feel as if we have been playing an amusing, challenging game with a formidable opponent, but at that point he suddenly gets up from the table and calls it a draw.

WENDY LESSER, the editor of *The Threepenny Review*, is the author of *The Life Below the Ground* (Faber & Faber).



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CAMBRIDGE DIARIST

Old Scores and New

WHILE LEBANON BLEEDS (SEE page 16), its former president, Amin Gemayel, is ensconced in Cambridge as a fellow at Harvard's Center for International Affairs. Last year there was much tut-tutting about scandal around here, and in the national press, after it became known that two donors to one of the graduate schools had been given "officer's cards"—literally nothing more than a piece of plastic entitling them to use the library. The appointment of Gemayel, which is a real scandal, hardly raised an eyebrow, in Cambridge or elsewhere. Upon arrival earlier this term he told the *Crimson*, the student newspaper, that he wanted to do peace research on the Middle East. If Gemayel is a researcher on anything, I am an astronaut. The fact is that Gemayel is a pathetically weak playboy-turned-gangster who has lived by the blithely brutal modalities of the Phalange and of its founding dynasty, to which he was the residual heir. Murder was never more wanton than under his rule, including intramural murder among the Maronites. His regime was perhaps the most corrupt in memory, and the least effective. But he kept it alive, and doubtless also fattened foreign bank accounts in the usual way of Lebanon: with proceeds from the sale of drugs, guns, and other contraband. I doubt that anyone comparably thuggish has ever held an academic post in America.

IN THE END, OF COURSE, GEMAYEL abandoned Lebanon because he had to. The Syrians, whom he had once welcomed and sanctioned, had now targeted him and his Christian constituency as enemies. He didn't even understand the simplest rule of Lebanese politics: never turn your back on an ally. (He himself had changed sides with blinding velocity.) So who brought him to Harvard? The usual cynics ascribed this feat to the "right-wingers" who are widely and erroneously supposed to run the center on behalf of the State Department. The truth is that the brief for Gemayel was brought by one Walid Khalidi, a Palestinian polemicist who is a former CFIA fellow and a professor at the Harvard Center for Middle East Studies. This tells you a lot about contemporary Arab politics. Here is one of Arafat's intellectuals, a dandyish tribune of the Palestinians, shilling for a Maronite politician whose men had perpetrated the massacres at Sabra and Shatila. Seems a bit strange. But both are scions of the old order—Khalidi coming from an old line of dignitaries, Gemayel being the son of a pharmacist, "condom Pierre," as he was known. What is at work in this intervention is the solidarity of elites that cuts across ethnicity and ideology in the Arab world. Oh yes, there is one more thing. Before Gemayel's term as president was up he had opened Lebanon's Christian ports to the entry of many thousands of PLO militiamen. (Once enemies themselves, they now shared an enemy: Lebanon's largest group, the disinherited Shiite.) Doubtless this Harvard sinecure was not the most substantial reward paid Gemayel for his service to the Palestinian cause. Still, it's hard to imagine Khalidi acting on Gemayel's behalf had that service not been performed. Peace researcher, indeed.

"THEY WERE DEALING WITH US AS if it were a war." So complained a 64-year-old Arab resident of Nahhalin to the *New York Times*. He was speaking of Israel's botched raid last week that left five dead and several handfuls wounded. The Palestinians want to have it both ways. But they can't proclaim and fight a civil insurrection and still expect to be treated as if it were all taking place on a movie set. One aspect of this paramilitary operation that went awry but has not been widely noted is that it was carried out by the Border Police, predominantly made up of Druze. They are an esoteric non-Muslim sect whose members, Robert Brenton Betts tells us in *The Druze* (Yale University Press), had "long chafed under the rule of the overwhelming Sunni majority." Some of them don't even think of themselves as Arabs. No army is secure against the callousness that comes with fighting. But when these units, technically better trained for riot control than the Israeli army, are deployed, ancient rancors come into play without the full mediating discipline of a Western code of arms.

WE POINTED OUT IN AN EDITORial note two weeks ago how asymmetrical was the coverage of the awful events in Lebanon and those in the territories occupied by Israel. Actually, since then, Lebanon has finally made it big as a news item. But the reason was not the routine deaths of the Lebanese; it was because at last there was "real news." Or, as the *Boston Globe* starkly put it on April 17 in its bold type, top-right front-page headline: "Spanish envoy dies in shelling in Lebanon."

FOR MANY YEARS UP TO THE NOT so distant past, the editors of the *Nation* expended enormous energy denying or minimizing the crimes of Stalinism. (For a lesser number of years and further back in time, the editors of TNR did more or less the same.) Now that Soviet historiography is itself beginning to come clean about the bloody past, one would think that the old faithful in the West wouldn't feel obliged to try to limit Stalin's kill count to some palatably low number. There is a lively argument among historians and demographers about the actual extent of the death toll. It's an argument among professionals. But writing in the *Nation* of March 6, Alexander Cockburn, who has a sentimental interest in this controversy but not the credentials to evaluate it, comes down hard for the low-end estimates (surprise!) of how many people, as he delicately puts it, "had an awful or terminal time of it between 1927 and 1953." He, for example, seems to favor "tens of thousands" as the number of deaths in the purges of 1937 and 1938. Actually, that's a number that hardly any Soviet experts credit. Cockburn similarly lowballs the toll of victims generally in the period from 1926 to 1939. (On this, scholars as different as Roy Medvedev, Robert Conquest, and Stephen Cohen agree that the number hovers at about 20 million.) But one of the historians Cockburn cites as supporting his computations never, in fact, did. Cockburn musters as authority a 1979 publication, *How the Soviet Union Is Ruled*, by Jerry Hough and Merle Fainsod, released as a new edition of Fainsod's 1973 book, *How Russia Is Ruled*. In Soviet studies Fainsod's name does command authority. But he died in 1972 and had nothing to do with the lean approximations that have so much appeal for Cockburn. Hough, who was Fainsod's student and acolyte, had been designated to help prepare the new edition. But after his mentor's death and his marriage to Sheila Fitzgerald, an old-fashioned, old left historian, Hough changed his views. They were not Fainsod's. Fainsod's widow despaired that her husband's reputation was being exploited for ideological ends of which he would have disapproved; his colleagues at Harvard's Russian Research Center refused to give the center's imprimatur to the Hough tome, an endorsement that had proudly appeared on both the first and second editions. Maybe Cockburn didn't know any of this, in which case it just shows how little one should trust him on matters of Soviet scholarship. But more likely he did know, and that just shows how little one can trust him on anything.

MARTIN PERETZ

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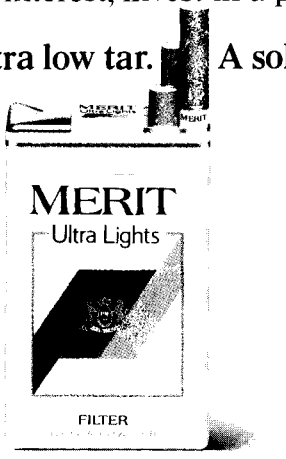

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